

Printed Pandemonium

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Printed Pandemonium

Popular Print and Politics in the Netherlands,
1650–72

By
Michel Reinders



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| Knuttel | W.P.C. Knuttel, <i>Catalogus van de pamflettenverzameling berustende in de Koninklijke Bibliotheek</i> , 9 vols in 10 bindings (Utrecht, 1978) [Reprint of original version printed in The Hague, 1889–1920]. |
| Petit | L.D. Petit, <i>Bibliotheek van de Nederlandsche pamfletten. Verzameling van de bibliotheek van Joannes Thysius en de bibliotheek der Rijks-Universiteit te Leiden</i> , 3 vols + supplt (The Hague, 1882–1934). |
| Tiele | P.A. Tiele, <i>Bibliotheek van de pamfletten, traktaten, plakaten en andere stukken over de Nederlandsche geschiedenis; en van in Nederland gedrukte stukken over gebeurtenissen in en buiten Europa, voornamelijk Engeland, Azië en Amerika. Beschreven, naar tijdsorde gerangschikt, en met alphabetische registers voorzien. Beschrijvinge der verzameling van Frederik Muller te Amsterdam, van het begin der 16de tot het midden der 18de eeuw</i> , 3 vols (Amsterdam, 1858–1861). |
| Van Alphen | G. van Alphen, <i>Catalogus der pamfletten van de Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit te Groningen</i> (Groningen, 1944). |
| Van Someren | J.F. van Someren, <i>Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit te Utrecht. Pamfletten niet voorkomende in afzonderlijke gedrukte catalogi der verzamelingen in andere openbare Nederlandsche bibliotheken</i> , 2 vols (Utrecht, 1915–1922). |
| Van der Wulp | J.K. van der Wulp, <i>Catalogus van de tractaten, pamfletten enz. over de geschiedenis van Nederland, aanwezig in de bibliotheek van Isaac Meulman</i> , 3 vols (Amsterdam, 1866–1868). |
| Zijlstra | W.C. Zijlstra, <i>Den Zeusen Beesem. Catalogus van de Nederlandse pamfletten (alsmede de niet-Zeeuwse plakaten en ordonnanties) tot en met 1795, aanwezig in de Zeeuwse Bibliotheek</i> (Middelburg, 1994). |

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INTRODUCTION

One of the killers cuts the right finger from the lifeless but still warm body of Johan de Witt. The politician's naked corpse hangs upside down, tied to a post by his ankles. Next to Johan hangs his brother Cornelis, who is also dead, but his body remains in one piece. The killer shows the bleeding, cut-off finger to his fellow assassins, an action that sets off a feeding frenzy among the killers. They pull on the arms of both brothers until the limbs tear off at the shoulders. They cut out the hearts from Johan's and Cornelis's chest and chop off their feet. Blood-smeared pieces of clothing and severed body parts pass from hand to hand in a spontaneously formed market for souvenirs of this terrible act. The bloodbath ends only after the last possible humiliation: the killers chew on the brothers' dead flesh, including their cut-off penises. The assassins will later describe their behaviour as "the verdict". It is 20 August 1672. Night has just fallen in The Hague near the Binnenhof, the administrative centre of the Dutch Republic. Hundreds, maybe thousands, of Dutchmen have just witnessed one of the most gruesome political murders in European history.

Only four weeks earlier, on 21 June 1672, Johan de Witt had realized that his popularity had declined below a critical point. The worried grand pensionary wrote a letter to his cousin Nicolaas Vivien, telling him that he did not know how to save the Dutch Republic. Four enemy states – France, England, Munster and Cologne – had entered the seven united provinces on the first day of June. Three weeks later, these foreign invaders occupied the provinces of Gelderland, Overijssel and Utrecht. Villages, cities and strongholds had fallen into enemy hands with little resistance. According to De Witt, however, there was an even bigger problem: "Our biggest threat is not the power or the progress of the enemy, but the general revolt, the disobedience and rebelliousness of the citizens and inhabitants in the cities and the peasants on the land".¹

The reality was even worse than Johan de Witt believed at that time. A couple of hours after he had mailed the letter, four of these "disobedient and rebellious" men attacked him on the street. They hit him in

¹ N. Napikse, *Brieven van Johan de Witt IV* (Amsterdam, 1913), 389.



Fig 1. The assassination of Johan and Cornelis de Witt. Atlas van Stolk, Rotterdam 2400 (Muller).

the abdomen and stabbed him with a knife. De Witt, the most influential politician of the Dutch Republic since his appointment to the office of grand pensionary in 1653, survived this first attempt on his life. A month later the “citizens and inhabitants” whom he had mentioned in his letter would not let him get away a second time.

The relationship between political upheaval (including assassination) and the press is at the heart of this book. There is no better event in the history of the Dutch Republic for an investigation illuminating this relationship than the “Year of Disaster”, 1672. Riotous Dutchmen reacted to the dramatic events of that year by debating politics with the pamphlet as their weapon of choice. Presses poured out publications as never before in Dutch history. In 1672, more than 1600 different pamphlets were published in editions that ran between 500 and 1500 copies, which meant that between one and two million pamphlets were circulating in the Republic. This historical treasure has never been systematically studied. By exploring these pamphlets and their relationship to source material such as correspondence, (manuscript) petitions, diaries and state papers, we can uncover a day-to-day narrative that offers revealing insights into this year of political turmoil.

The Dutch Prodigy

The Dutch Republic was in many ways the prodigy of her time. During the revolt against Spain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the United Provinces had become a major economic, political and cultural force in Europe.² The Republic became the envy of all her neighbours through spectacular economic growth that was mostly sustained by water-borne trade. This trade needed protection and thus a strong fleet, which gave admirals Michiel de Ruyter, Witte de With and Maarten Tromp the opportunity to become legends during their lifetimes. During a battle at sea in 1667, two Englishmen were so impressed by the Dutch fleet that one of them cried, "I think the devil shits Dutchmen".³

The Dutch Republic stood out in other ways. Half of all Dutchmen – the highest percentage in Europe – lived in cities. Moreover, the Dutch Republic was the centre of the worldwide printing industry, enjoyed one of the highest literacy rates, had a booming production of subversive publications and, because of its fragmented political structure, experienced little successful censorship.⁴

In the Dutch Republic one was never far from politics. For one thing, the physical distance between politicians and people was indeed small. The Republic had a political centre – The Hague – where all the political bodies resided. Each of the seven Dutch provinces (Holland, Zeeland, Gelderland, Utrecht, Overijssel, Friesland and Groningen) had its own provincial government, called the Provincial States. In addition, there were several supra-provincial bodies in Dutch politics, most importantly the States General and the Council of State that dealt with military tasks, governed the *generaliteitslanden* (Brabant and Limburg) and formally communicated with foreign powers on behalf of the Republic. But the delegates that filled these bodies all came from the cities. And it was at the markets, on the public squares in front of the city hall and in the canal boats in these cities that people and politics met on a daily basis.⁵

² K. Davids and J. Lucassen (ed.), *A Miracle Mirrored: The Dutch Republic in European Perspective* (Cambridge, 1995); M. Prak, *Gouden Eeuw. Het Raadsel van de Republiek* (Nijmegen, 2002); J.I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic. Its Rise, Greatness and Fall 1477–1806* (Oxford, 1995). I have used J.I. Israel, *De Republiek 1477–1806* (Franeker, 1996).

³ S. Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches. An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 1988), 234.

⁴ M. 't Hart, 'The Dutch Republic: The Urban Impact upon Politics', in *A Miracle Mirrored*, ed. Davids and Lucassen, 57–93.

⁵ A. Fockema, *De Nederlandse Staat onder de Republiek* (Amsterdam, 1969), 11–22, 58–60; R. Fruin, *Geschiedenis der staatsinstellingen in Nederland tot den val der Republiek* (Den

As a result of this fragmented political structure and lack of a strong central government, the Dutch Republic had always known a high degree of (indirect) participation. Dutch office holders could not make decisions on issues without some kind of consent from their own community. The members of provincial governments discussed the issues again and again with the home front. This practice, known as *consultation*, ensured that politics in the Republic were interwoven from top to bottom. As a result, whenever a decision was taken in the States General or Provincial States, it had already been exhaustingly discussed in the city governments of the Republic. Consequently, it was not uncommon for city councils to discuss national and international political issues during their meetings.⁶

Moreover, this political structure meant that Dutch politics operated at least in part on a system of persuasion. This practice was most visible in The Hague. Here, many groups and individuals met on a daily basis: delegates of the cities, delegates of the provincial states, delegates of the States General, the stadholder and large crowds of non-officeholding men who wanted to ask questions or present petitions to government. The Binnenhof, the political centre – and consequently also the news centre of The Hague – was always filled with “an army of men who provided people with news”.⁷

Office holders often stood in close contact with Dutch citizens during their everyday life. Where Louis XIV had the protection of Versailles and Charles II could escape to Whitehall, Johan de Witt shared the streets with

Haag, 1980), 72–78, 81–111, 214–218, 230–257; Israel, *De Republiek*; J.L. Price, *Holland and the Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century. The Politics of Particularism* (Oxford, 1994), 20–31, 127–128, 212; A.Th. van Deursen, “De Raad van State onder de Republiek, 1588–1795,” in *Raad van State 450 jaar* (Den Haag, 1981); S. Groenveld, “Unie, religie en militie. Binnenlandse verhoudingen in de Nederlandse Republiek voor en na de Munsterse Vrede,” *De zeventiende eeuw* 13, no. 1 (1997); H. Wansink, “Holland and Six Allies: The Republic of the Seven United Provinces,” *Britain and the Netherlands* 4 (1971); M. ‘t Hart, “Autonoom maar kwetsbaar. De Middelburgse regenten en de opstand van 1651,” *De zeventiende eeuw* 9, no. 1 (1993): 51–62; G. de Bruin, “De soevereiniteit in de republiek: een machtsprobleem,” *BMGN* 94, no. 1 (1979); M.E.H.N. Mout, “Van arm vaderland tot eendrachtige republiek. De rol van politieke theorieën in de Nederlandse Opstand,” *BMGN* 101, no. 3 (1986), 358; J.J. Kalma and K. de Vries, *Friesland in het rampjaar 1672. It jier fan de miste kansen* (Leeuwarden, 1972); E.H. Waterbolk, “Aspects of the Frisian Contribution to the Culture of the Low Countries in the Early Modern Period,” *Britain and the Netherlands* 4 (1971).

⁶ Price, *Holland*, 125.

⁷ P. Knevel, *Het Haags Bureau. 17e-eeuwse ambtenaren tussen staatsbelang en eigenbelang* (Amsterdam, 2001), 11; M. ‘t Hart, “Cities and Statemaking in the Dutch Republic 1580–1680,” *Theory and Society* 18, no. 5 (1989): 666; I. Weekhout, *Boekencensuur in de Noordelijke Nederlanden. De vrijheid van drukpers in de zeventiende eeuw* (The Hague, 1998), 81.

his fellow citizens. Moreover, decisions in local, provincial and national politics were taken in the name of the body politic that the delegated members represented. Dutch public life, on the streets, in canal boats and in the houses of city militia, therefore often had political debate for a soundtrack. These public places formed the daily environment of Dutch citizens, and it was this middle group in Dutch society – between the office-holding elite and the disenfranchised rabble – that was at the centre of the 1672 riot against government.

In the body politic of the Dutch Republic no clear-cut distinctions were made between ruler and subjects. A strict dichotomy between regents with their ‘high culture’ and the people with their ‘low culture’ cannot reflect the complex of mutual influences operating in the daily practice of politics.⁸ It was a widely held opinion among elites during the entire early modern period that “the people” were incapable of rational thought and that everyone who picked up a stone during a riot was part of the “many-headed monster”. From the regents’ point of view, communication with citizens was therefore in a way pointless. Pamphlet specialist Craig Harline has claimed that “regents preferred absolutely no discussion of politics and considered a single critical pamphlet as one too many”.⁹ However, citizens and popular debate were, despite objections from elites, important parts of early modern political life.¹⁰ One of the pamphlets that appeared in the middle of the chaotic events of 1672 explicitly mentioned that the events had been executed “*non a Plebe, sed a Populo*” [not by the rabble, but by the people].¹¹ These debates between citizens and rulers became more visible during times of political crises, making 1672 a banner year for political debate and pamphleteering.

Dutch Citizenship

Dutch contemporaries called citizens *burghers*. A *burgher* was not a patrician or a nobleman, nor was he a peasant or an outlaw. Although all *burghers* were inhabitants of cities, not all inhabitants of cities were *burghers*.

⁸ Cf. D. Gordon, “The Great Enlightenment Massacre,” *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 359, no. 1 (1998); B. Scribner, “Is a History of Popular Culture Possible?” *History of European Ideas* 10, no. 2 (1989); B. Sharp, “Popular Political Opinion in England 1660–1685,” *History of European Ideas* 10, no. 1 (1989).

⁹ C.E. Harline, *Pamphlets, Printing and Political Culture in the early Dutch Republic* (Dordrecht, 1987), 117–118.

¹⁰ Price, *Holland*, 95–96.

¹¹ *Copie van een Brief, Geschreven uyt Rotterdam* (1672), Knuttel 10479.

A *burgher* had privileges on which he swore an oath and was consequently elevated above people without these special rights.¹² The heart of citizenship was thus a contract, a combination of rights and duties.¹³ In general, we can say that these *burghers* were distinguished from those above them (magistrates whom they agreed to obey) but also elevated from those below (non-citizens, the *multitudo bestialis*). In the Dutch Republic, there were therefore three layers of political society: regents, citizens and the rabble.¹⁴

Starting with the lowest category, there can be no doubt that there was a group that was 'out' on all accounts. This group made up ten to twenty per cent of the population.¹⁵ Although historians have not agreed on who exactly belonged to the rabble, it is safe to say that the unemployed and all those without a fixed place to live must be included. Sometimes, the rabble has been described as the people who did not pay taxes, a definition that enlarged the group. Another distinguishing feature of the rabble was political exclusion. "The rabble", explained a pamphleteer, "has no power to make any changes in government".¹⁶

Besides these 'outs', there were two kind of 'ins': citizens and regents. In some cities there were two categories of citizenship: small and large. The difference between the two was sometimes economic (Nijmegen), sometimes political (Amsterdam), but it was always meant to show some sort of difference between the most '*aensienlijke, principaelste, voornaemste*'

¹² R. von Friedeburg, "The Problems of Passions and of Love of the Fatherland in Protestant Thought: Melanchton to Althusius, 1520s to 1620s," *Cultural and Social History* 2 (2005): 81–82; M. Roche, "Citizenship, Social Theory, and Social Change," *Theory and Society* 16, no. 3 (1987): 365; H.M.E.P. Kuijpers and M. Prak, "Burger, ingezetene, vreemdeling: burgerschap in Amsterdam in de 17e en 18e eeuw," in *Burger. Een geschiedenis van het begrip 'burger' in de Nederlanden van de Middeleeuwen tot de 21ste eeuw*, ed. J. Kloek and K. Tilmans (Amsterdam, 2002), 118. Cf. P. Hellebuyck, *'t Lof van Orangien* (1672), Knuttel 10253, 20; *Eedt Voor de Orgeren [sic] en Ingesetenen Der Stadt Groningen* (1672), Knuttel 10139.

¹³ C. Tilly, "A Primer on Citizenship," *Theory and Society* 26 (1997): 600–601; Cf. P. Riesenbergh, *Citizenship in the Western Tradition. Plato to Rousseau* (London, 1992), 227–229.

¹⁴ Cf. H.W. Blom, "Burger en Belang: Pieter de la Court over de politieke betekenis van burgers," in *Burger*, ed. Kloek and Tilmans, 110; Riesenbergh, *Citizenship*, 34–35.

¹⁵ L. Panhuysen, *De Ware Vrijheid. De levens van Johan en Cornelis de Witt* (Amsterdam/Antwerp, 2005), 58.

¹⁶ H.R.a.L.K., *Het Rechte Fondament Van het Nieuwe Herstelde Oudt Hollands Regt* (1672), Knuttel 10309. Cf. M. Walzer, "Citizenship," in *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, ed. T. Ball, J. Farr and R. Hanson (Cambridge, 1989), 213.

(i.e. most respectable) and the rest of the citizens. These most respectable citizens called themselves regents as soon as they obtained a political office. A regent was thus nothing more than a citizen (or sometimes nobleman) with an important political office. If a regent lost his office, he was an ordinary citizen again.¹⁷

The dividing line between people who had full citizen rights and duties and those who had only some was sometimes blurry. Not all citizens were registered, and not everybody took the oath. This distinction between *burghers* or *poorters* (who were always registered) and *ingesetenen* (who were often not registered) may seem apparent, but in practice, it was not. There were differences from city to city. Moreover, as soon as *ingesetenen* fulfilled the duties of a citizen (paying taxes, helping control fires in the cities, at times even being part of the city militia) they could also claim the benefits and become de facto citizens.¹⁸

There was another problem: how to distinguish an ordinary citizen from a respectable citizen? Since the regents were not royalty, they had to justify their position in society by pointing out their capability, or in their own words, their *beqaemheyt*. They could not boast about a noble heritage, for their lineage was usually comparable to that of the ordinary citizens whom they represented and governed. As one pamphleteer wrote: "It is unbearable in a free Republic to let someone remain in government all his life [...] decent *burghers* should also compete to get a position at city hall".¹⁹

¹⁷ Blom, "Burger en Belang," 102; J.A. Schimmel, *Burgerrecht te Nijmegen 1592–1810. Geschiedenis van de verlening en burgerlijst* (Tilburg, 1966), 3–8; P.D.J. Iterson, "Ingezetenen van Amsterdam," *Amstelodadum. Maandblad voor de kennis van Amsterdam. Orgaan van het Genootschap Amstelodadum* 74, no. 3 (1987); Kuijpers and Prak, "Burger, ingezetene, vreemdeling," 117; M. Prak, "Het oude recht der burgeren. De betekenis van burgerschap in het Amsterdam van de zestiende en zeventiende eeuw," in *Beschaafde Burgers. Burgerlijkheid in de vroegmoderne tijd*, ed. H. Hendrix and M. Meijer Drees (Amsterdam, 2001), 29; 't Hart, "Cities and Statemaking," 666.

¹⁸ J.C. Boogman, "The Union of Utrecht: Its Genesis and Consequences," *BMGN* 94 (1979): 381; J. Kloek and K. Tilmans, "Inleiding," in *Burger*, ed. Kloek and Tilmans, 2–3; Kuijpers and Prak, "Burger, ingezetene, vreemdeling," 119–123; Schimmel, *Burgerrecht*, 17; M. Prak, "Burghers into Citizens: Urban and Cational Citizenship in the Netherlands during the Revolutionary Era (c.1800)," *Theory and Society* 26, no. 1 (1997): 407.

¹⁹ *Het Rechte Fondament*, Knuttel 10309. Cf. *Verhael Van den wonderlijken Oproer, Voorgevallen in de Provincie van Mallanbruino* (1672), Knuttel 10600, 7; P. Valkenier, *'t Verwerde Europa*, vol. 1 (Amsterdam, 1742), 737; *Remonstrantie* (1672), Tiele 6493, 3; H.W. Blom, *Morality and Causality in Politics. The Rise of Naturalism in Dutch Seventeenth-Century Political Thought* (unpublished dissertation, 1995), 41.

As long as regents supported the common good of the entire political body (or at least its largest part), there was no problem. In practice, however, regents tended to form an oligarchy and pursued their own interests or governed in a way that benefited restricted groups. Regents often presented themselves as a patriciate that simply deserved to rule. They argued in circles, claiming that regents were innately fit for government because they were regents. In short, these men chose to see themselves as a separate group and considered themselves elevated above other citizens.²⁰ At times, such attitudes could blur the distinction between the terms citizen and subject. As Robert von Friedeburg wrote, "Citizens, those ruling themselves rather than being ruled, were meant to be a privileged minority of patricians, not all the inhabitants of a town".²¹

Citizenship was not a permanent condition. Some people obtained citizenship while others lost it. Citizenship could be transferred to children, be bought, be gained through marriage or obtained as a gift.²² At times, cities used cheap access to citizenship to attract more inhabitants. In 1656, the city of Nijmegen, for example, offered citizenship for free. This method was not always successful. In Nijmegen, not one person came to take up this offer.²³ Whenever someone moved to another city where he was granted citizenship as well, his old citizenship was revoked. Citizenship could also be cancelled for committing a crime, or it could be taken away for political reasons. If someone had become a citizen because he or she had married a citizen, the citizenship was lost after a divorce. The rules of admission and expulsion changed as the political, economic and cultural

²⁰ D.J. Roorda, *Het Rampjaar 1672* (Bussum, 1971), 29. Cf. R. von Friedeburg, "Civic Humanism and Republican Citizenship in Early Modern Germany," in *Republicanism. A Shared European Heritage*, ed. M. van Gelderen and Q. Skinner (Cambridge, 2002), 128; H. Schilling, "Civic Republicanism in Late Medieval and Early Modern German Cities," in *Religion, Political Culture and the Emergence of Early Modern Society. Essays in German and Dutch History* (Leiden/New York/Cologne, 1992), 32; P. Knevel, *Burgers in het geweer. De schutterijen in Holland, 1550–1700* (Hilversum 1994), 329.

²¹ Friedeburg, "Civic Humanism and Republican Citizenship," 135. Cf. Knevel, *Burgers in het geweer*, 130; L. Kooijmans, "Patriciaat en aristocratisering in Holland tijdens de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw," in *De bloem der natie*, ed. J. Aalbers and M. Prak (Meppel, 1987); H. van Nierop, "Private Interests, Public Policies. Petitions in the Dutch Republic," in *The Public and Private in Dutch Culture of the Golden Age*, ed. A.K. Wheelock and A. Seeff (Newark, 2000), 35; Price, *Holland*, 56; 't Hart, "Cities and Statemaking," 680–682.

²² Dorren, "De eerzamen," 62–67; Prak, "Het oude recht der burgersen," 27.

²³ Schimmel, *Burgerrecht*, 9, 50. The Dutch were not the only ones who tried to lure new inhabitants to their cities. In 1672, the Danish government published a decree in the Dutch Republic claiming that all non-Danish could now get the same rights as Danish citizens if they would immigrate to their country. *Privilegie van den Koningh van Denemarcken aen alle Vreemdelingen* (1672), Tiele 6037.

contexts changed. This could mean that someone who was rejected for citizenship in one city could try again in another or that someone who had been granted citizenship at one time could be excluded at a later date. Most cities, however, created similar obstacles for new citizenship to make sure that they attracted the right kind of people.²⁴

By acquiring citizenship, the fresh citizen had agreed to some duties and enjoyed several privileges. A first privilege of citizenship was legal protection. Did a defendant have an address? Was he an acknowledged member of the community? A defendant's status influenced the severity of the judicial sentence. Someone who was not settled could be arrested without restriction and sentenced without a trial, while a citizen could never be convicted without a trial before peers.²⁵ Citizenship had more privileges: only citizens were, for example, eligible to hold public office, which was an important advantage. There were nearly three thousand offices to fill in the city of Amsterdam alone. Other cities also had impressive numbers of offices.²⁶ In places where political office holders were chosen by vote, only citizens could vote in such elections. Moreover, only citizens had access to public services such as public education and the city orphanage. Citizenship also offered economic privileges. Citizens were exempt from certain tolls, they could choose the best spots on marketplaces, and they could become members of guilds.²⁷

²⁴ Schimmel, *Burgerrecht*, 2; G. Dorren, "De eerzamen. Zeventiende-eeuws burgerschap in Haarlem," in *De stijl van de burger. Over nederlandse burgerlijke cultuur vanaf de middeleeuwen*, ed. R. Aerts and H. te Velde (Kampen, 1998), 62. Cf. H. Nader, *Liberty in Absolutist Spain. The Habsburg Sale of Towns, 1516–1700* (Baltimore/London, 1990), 31.

²⁵ N.Z. Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (London, 1975), 190–194; P. Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1978); M. Goldie, "The Unacknowledged Republic: Officeholding in Early Modern England," in *The Politics of the Excluded, c.1500–1850*, ed. T. Harris (New York, 2001), 153–194; T. Harris, "Understanding Popular Politics in Restoration Britain," in *A Nation Transformed*, ed. A. Houston and S. Pincus (Cambridge, 2001), 125–146; S. Hindle, "The Political Culture of the Middling Sort in English Rural Communities, c.1550–1700," in *The Politics of the Excluded, 125–152*; F. Egmond, "Fragmentatie, rechtsverscheidenheid en rechtsongelijkheid in de Noordelijke Nederlanden tijdens de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw," in *Nieuw licht op oude justitie. Misdaad en straf ten tijde van de republiek*, ed. S. Faber (Muiderberg, 1989), 9–14; W.T.M. Frijhoff and M. Spies, *1650. Bevochten eendracht* (Den Haag, 1999), 89; Dorren, "De eerzamen," 63; Prak, "Burghers into Citizens," 405–406; Schimmel, *Burgerrecht*, 75–76.

²⁶ Th. Bussemaker, "Lijst van ambten en officiën ter begeving staande van burgemeesteren van Amsterdam in 1749," *BMGN* 28 (1907). Cf. Goldie, "The Unacknowledged Republic"; C. Condren, "Liberty of Office and its Defence in Seventeenth-century Political Argument," *History of Political Thought* 18, no. 3 (1997).

²⁷ GAR, 1.01, 495; Prak, "Het oude recht der burgeren," 28; Kuijpers, "Burger, ingezetene, vreemdeling," 115.

Along with these privileges, citizens had duties. They had to pay taxes, act as firemen and keep the water free when it froze. Moreover, they had to protect the city by joining the city militia and walking the night watch.²⁸ This city militia, or *schutterij*, was an organisation that resembled trained bands in England, or *gesellschaften* in Germany. Only a minor part of society – between ten and twenty per cent – joined a *schutterij*. Sometimes membership became more exclusive. At other times, some poorer individuals (but not the rabble) were allowed to join the city militias.²⁹

During the revolt against Spain this *schutterij* had been a military organisation of great importance. After the Act of Abjuration in 1581, however, Dutch city militias were reformed, turning them from military units that had to keep the entire Republic safe into local and social organisations that were supposed to guard the city. The reason for this transformation was obvious: by the seventeenth century, city militias would stand little chance on the battlefield against professional soldiers. The task of these amateurs lay in the city, not on the battlefield. In fact, in 1672, members of the city militia were asked to fight at a front away from home for the last time in the history of the Dutch Republic.³⁰

In addition to being a military organisation, city militias assumed political importance in Dutch society. Over time, the city militia became an important representational body for citizens.³¹ During times of political upheaval the city militia held a particularly interesting position. On the one hand, they were a weapon in the hands of the magistrates against civil disorder. On the other hand, they were often at the heart of riots and revolts. During a riot, militiamen could never stay passive.³² On 16 June 1672, for example, the city government in Haarlem called the city militia to arms to put down riots. This action exploded in the faces of these regents

²⁸ Knevel, *Burgers in het geweer*; Dorren, "De eerzamen," 64; Prak, "Burghers into Citizens," 406; D.J. Roorda, *Partij en Factie. De oproeren van 1672 in de steden van Holland en Zeeland, een krachtmeting tussen partijen en facties* (Groningen, 1978), 102. Cf. Nader, *Liberty*, 32–33; Tilly, "A Primer on Citizenship," 602.

²⁹ Knevel, *Burgers in het geweer*, 189–204; G. Dorren, *Eenheid en verscheidenheid. De burgers van Haarlem in de Gouden Eeuw* (Amsterdam, 2001), 183–184; Price, *Holland*, 94; M. Prak, "Burgers onder de wapenen, van de zestiende tot de achttiende eeuw," *Tijdschrift voor sociale geschiedenis* 23, no. 1 (1997): 6.

³⁰ Knevel, *Burgers in het geweer*, 13–19; Prak, "Burgers onder de wapenen," 1–8.

³¹ Prak, "Het oude recht der burgeren," 34; Knevel, *Burgers in het geweer*, 93–97, 329; 't Hart, "Cities and Statemaking," 665; Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 46.

³² W. Vroesen, *Waaragtig Verhaal van de Muiterij binnen de stad Rotterdam* (1785), xvii. Cf. *Remonstrantie* (1672), Knuttel 10579a, 7; Dorren, *Eenheid en verscheidenheid*, 170–180; P. Knevel, *Wakkere Burgers. De Alkmaarse schutterij 1400–1795* (Alkmaar, 1991), 14; Price, *Holland*, 95.

when instead of suppressing the riots, the city militia joined the rioters and took control over the city for several weeks. In the end, the city militia always had to choose a side.³³

Orangism

These riotous citizens, who would force many regents out of office in 1672, often referred to the events of 1650 as the origin of their disagreements with their regents. In that year, the reckless stadholder William II had sent his army to lay siege to Amsterdam after a quarrel with several regents from Holland about the size of the Dutch army. This siege failed, mostly because the prince's army got lost during the march towards Amsterdam. Nonetheless, William II imprisoned six regents in the Castle of Loevestein in 1650, including Jacob de Witt (1589–1674), the father of Johan and Cornelis. Shortly after this display of muscular politics, William died unexpectedly, of the chicken pox.³⁴

Willem III (1650–1702) was born six days after his father's death. He became personally involved in politics in the late 1660s. By then the regents of the True Freedom as they were now called (most importantly, Johan de Witt) had taken over government and the position of stadholder no longer existed in five of the seven provinces. (Groningen and Friesland chose a stadholder from the Nassau family, not from the Orange family.)³⁵ In 1667, the prince's political fortunes reached a nadir when Johan de Witt devised the Perpetual Edict. With this document, Holland declared that it would never again appoint a stadholder. In consolation, William was given a position in the Council of State. The prince was offended by this offer and summarized his own life up until that point: "I have been born and raised under bad stars". Set against this backdrop, the events of the year of disaster take on a distinct form: the Dutch revolted against the men of the True Freedom out of love for the prince of Orange. After all, were not the princes of Orange the "fathers of the fatherland"?³⁶

³³ P. Langedult, *Kort verhaal van de burgerlijke oproeren, voorgevallen binnen Haarlem*, ed. G.H. Kurtz (Haarlem, 1946), 14. Cf. Price, *Holland*, 8.

³⁴ Frijhoff and Spies, 1650; S. Groenveld, *De Prins voor Amsterdam. Reacties uit pamfletten op de aanslag van 1650* (Bussum, 1967).

³⁵ D.J. Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 11–19.

³⁶ G.J. Renier, *De Noord-Nederlandse Natie* (Utrecht, 1948), 209–210; Price, *Holland*, 154; P. Geyl, "Het stadhouderschap in de partijliteratuur onder De Witt," in *Pennestrijd over staat en historie. Opstellen over de Vaderlandse Geschiedenis aangevuld met Geyl's Levensverhaal (tot 1945)* (Groningen, 1971); K. Haley, *William of Orange and the English Opposition 1672–4*

In a way, they were. The princes of Orange, and consequently Orangism, accompanied the Dutch Republic from its genesis in the sixteenth century until its demise in the late eighteenth century. Orangism has been described as more a sentiment or a feeling than a political ideology.³⁷ The elusiveness of Orangism is mostly caused by its changing character over time. When William of Orange (1533–1584) became the first stadholder in the late sixteenth century, Orangism was something completely new. It was a fresh expression of joining the Revolt. But by the time his great grandson William III was appointed to the office of stadholder in 1672, Orangism had become part of tradition and an established movement that could boast about its crucial role in Dutch political history.

Most generally, Orangism was based on the thought that the Dutch Republic needed a prince of Orange as a check on the regents' government. The prince filled the offices of stadholder, captain-general of the army and admiral-general of the fleet. The office of stadholder was unique in early modern history and did not fit neatly within the Aristotelian categories of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy.³⁸ Put simply: the princes of Orange were an independent political force, but they would never become kings.³⁹

While Orangist political thought did lean heavily on the concept of monarchy, it stood apart on several key issues. Most importantly, Orangist thinkers did not address the nature of sovereignty, mostly because the use of the term "absolute sovereignty" was highly problematic in a Dutch Republic that had overcome the absolute Spanish tyrant under the

(Oxford, 1952); G.O. van de Klashorst, " 'Metten schijn van monarchie getemperd'. De verdediging van het stadhouderschap in de partijliteratuur 1650–1686," in *Pieter de La Court in zijn tijd: aspecten van een veelzijdig publiciste (1618–1685)*, ed. H.W. Blom and I. Wildenberg (Amsterdam/Maarssen, 1986); J. Stern, *Orangism in the Dutch Republic in Word and Image, 1650–75* (Manchester, 2010).

³⁷ Roorda, *Het Rampjaar 1672* (Bussum, 1972), 62; Stern, *Orangism in the Dutch Republic*, 4. Cf. Geyl, *Oranje en Stuart 1641–1672* (Zeist/Arnhem/Antwerp, 1963), 249; G.O. van de Klashorst, "De ware vrijheid, 1650–1672," in *Vrijheid. Een geschiedenis van de vijftiende tot de twintigste eeuw*, ed. E.O.G. Haitsma Mulier and W.R.E. Velema (Amsterdam, 1999), 168–169.

³⁸ H.H. Rowen, "Neither Fish nor Fowl: The Stadholderate in the Dutch Republic," in *Political Ideas & Institutions in the Dutch Republic* ed. H.H. Rowen and A. Lossky (Pasadena, CA, 1985).

³⁹ E.H. Kossmann, *Political Thought in the Dutch Republic. Three Studies* (Amsterdam, 2000), 50. Cf. Stern *Orangism in the Dutch Republic*, 29–57; J.I. Israel, *Monarchy, Orangism, and Republicanism in the Later Dutch Golden Age, Second Golden Age Lecture. Delivered on Thursday 11 March 2004* (Amsterdam, 2004), 12–17; C.E. Levillain, "William III's Military and Political Career in Neo-Roman Context 1672–1702," *The Historical Journal* 48, no. 2 (2005).

guidance of the prince of Orange.⁴⁰ They were, however, eager to raise the splendour of the House of Orange and its history, issues on which they could make a very strong case.⁴¹ They often repeated the image of the first William of Orange as father of the fatherland.⁴² Moreover, pamphleteers leapt at opportunities to stress the bond between the House of Orange and the English House of Stuart and the bond between the House of Orange and the True Reformed Religion.⁴³

The supporters of the prince of Orange are generally found among the badly defined categories of the people, orthodox preachers, the nobility, the army and sailors. Although such pigeonholing is never fool proof, the description generally fits these groups.⁴⁴ To be sure, ordinary Dutchmen did not blindly follow the prince of Orange in everything he did. Support for the prince increased and decreased among members of all social classes. In 1672, most groups supported the prince, but this support was neither automatic nor everlasting.⁴⁵ Moreover, at times, the support was not at all what the prince of Orange had been hoping for. After July 1672, for example, the explosive and violent Orangism on Dutch streets was far from what the prince of Orange had envisioned.⁴⁶ In general, we can say that support for the prince of Orange was based firstly on the thought that he deserved a place in Dutch politics and secondly on the

⁴⁰ Geyl, "Het stadhouderschap," 39; Klashorst, "Metten schijn," 125; H.H. Rowen, *The Princes of Orange. The Stadholders in the Dutch Republic* (Cambridge, 1988), 108; S. Groenveld, *De Prins*, 51; Geyl, "Het stadhouderschap," 21.

⁴¹ Klashorst, "Metten schijn," 130.

⁴² Oomius, *Oorloghs Bazuyne* (1672), Knuttel 10631, 34.

⁴³ S. Groenveld, "The House of Orange and the House of Stuart, 1639–1650: A Revision," *The Historical Journal* 34, no. 4 (1991).

⁴⁴ J.H. Grever, "The Structure of Decision-Making in the States General of the Dutch Republic 1660–68," *Parliaments, Estates and Representations* 2, no. 2 (1982): 152. S. Groenveld, *Evidente factiën in den staet. Sociaalpolitieke verhoudingen in de 17e-eeuwse Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden* (Hilversum, 1990), 7; Renier, *De Noord-Nederlandse Natie*, 230; J.C. Boogman, "The Union of Utrecht: Its Genesis and Consequences," *BMGN* 94 (1979); J.H. Kluiver, "Zeeuwse reacties op de Acte van Seclusie," *BMGN* 91, no. 3 (1980): 428; H.H. Rowen, *John de Witt. Statesman of the 'True Freedom'* (Cambridge/London, 2002), 19; G. Groenhuis, *De predikanten. De sociale positie van de gereformeerde predikanten in de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden voor 1700* (Groningen, 1977), 33; Price, *Holland*, 70–71; Panhuysen, *De Ware Vrijheid*, 139.

⁴⁵ Naeranus, *Naukeurige Bedenkingen* (1672), Knuttel 10386, 10. Cf. Fruin, *Geschiedenis der staatsinstellingen*, 281; Price, *Holland*, 77; Rowen, *John de Witt. Statesman*, 28, 68; A.W. Kroon, *Jan de Witt contra Oranje. 1650–1672. Geschiedkundige bijdrage, uit officiële bescheiden geput, met drie bijlagen, bevattende onuitgegeven stukken, de verhooren van Cornelis de Witt* (Amsterdam, 1868), 43; W. Troost, *William III, The Stadholder-King. A Political Biography* (Aldershot, 2005), 43; J. Stern, "The Rhetoric of Popular Orangism, 1650–72," *Historical Research* 77, no. 196 (2004): 203.

⁴⁶ Israel, *De Republiek*, 884.

perceived advantages that this support would bring to the supporting group or individual.⁴⁷ Love for the prince of Orange was never absolute and unquestioning.

True Freedom

The peak of the Golden Age of the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century has often been equated with the period of the True Freedom (1650–1672). William Temple (1628–1699), the English ambassador in The Hague during the 1660s, claimed that the Dutch Republic was at the time known internationally as “The Envy of some, the Fear of others, and the Wonder of all their Neighbours”.⁴⁸

True Freedom is, however, not easily defined. It was a grab-bag term that changed with every new text that was published in its spirit. Its protagonists, publicists as well as politicians, were not always aware that they were considered part of it.⁴⁹ It is even questionable whether some of the protagonists would have agreed to be part of it at all. Therefore, True Freedom is hardly ever defined as a clear ideology. Gert Onne van de Klashorst labelled it a “political slogan”.⁵⁰ Herbert Rowen rightly defined the adherents as “a clique or a congeries of cliques that was always a narrow party of the elite”.⁵¹ True Freedom was simply not the freedom of the Dutch citizens.⁵²

The political thought of the True Freedom can best be understood as an attempt to secure sovereignty for the individual provinces and exclude the prince of Orange from politics. Since all governments with a monarchical element ran the risk of falling into tyranny, the message of True Freedom’s adherents could be put largely and simply: stadholders threaten Dutch freedom.⁵³ During the First Stadholderless Period, as the period 1650–1672 is also known, several regents, mostly from Holland, argued that now was the time for unlimited provincial sovereignty. Johan de Witt was, for

⁴⁷ Cf. *Apologie* (1672), Knuttel 10263, 6.

⁴⁸ W. Temple, *Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands* (London, 1673).

⁴⁹ E. Haitzma Mulier, “Spinoza en Tacitus: de filosoof en de geschiedschrijver,” in *Het beeld in de spiegel. Historiografische verkenningen. Liber amicorum voor Piet Blaas*, ed. E.O.G. Haitzma Mulier, L.H. Maas and J. Vogel (Hilversum, 2000), 68; Van de Klashorst, “De ware vrijheid,” 184.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 185.

⁵¹ Rowen, *John de Witt. Statesman*, 65.

⁵² Klashorst, “De ware vrijheid,” 176.

⁵³ Price, *Holland*, 166–167.

example, furious at an English ambassador who had called the Dutch a *respublica* using the singular form, whereas De Witt claimed it was a *respublica foederatae*, the multiple form.⁵⁴

In addition to these two generally agreed-upon characteristics of True Freedom, there are more disputed aspects. True Freedom policy was, for example, aimed at prosperity and not the pursuit of honour.⁵⁵ It lacked an expensive court with monarchs who waged wars for their own glory and courtiers who preyed upon the populace. Such government without a princely court, claimed adherents of the True Freedom, was favourable for the economy. Moreover, True Freedom meant relative religious tolerance; according to some it even meant secularisation.⁵⁶

Between 1650 and 1672 Orangists and adherents of the True Freedom often clashed, with their greatest battle coming in 1672. Still as an analytical scheme, Orangists versus True Freedom is problematic and cannot clarify everything that happened in that year. Explanations based on this scheme have forced people and events into the mould of one of the two movements, implying that supporting one party was equal to opposing the other. The riotous citizens who played leading roles in 1672 have, for example, been labelled Orangist because they criticised the thoughts and actions of adherents of the True Freedom.⁵⁷ Many historical works have used the events of 1672 to show that one of the two parties had been right.⁵⁸ A close reading of the sources tells a different story altogether: citizens, whether organised or not, had their own grievances and while most of them supported the appointment of William of Orange to the office of

⁵⁴ Israel, *De Republiek*, 791.

⁵⁵ Price, *Holland*, 161.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁵⁷ P. Geyl, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse stam*, 3 vols. (Amsterdam/Antwerp, 1959), 84–88; Rowen, *The Princes of Orange*, 133–134.

⁵⁸ R. Fruin, *Verspreide Geschriften*, 10 vols. (Den Haag, 1900–1905); *Geschiedenis der staatsinstellingen in Nederland tot den val der Republiek*. Uitgegeven door dr. H.T. Colenbrander. Tweede bijgewerkte druk 1922 ingeleid door prof. Dr. I. Schöffer ('s-Gravenhage, 1980); N. Japikse, *Johan de Witt* (Amsterdam, 1915), *Prins Willem III. De stadhouderkoning*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1930); F.J.L. Krämer, "Prins Willem III en de historische critiek," *Onze Eeuw* 4, no. 4 (1904); Kroon, *Jan de Witt contra Oranje*; J. Tollebeek, *De toga van Fruin. Denken over geschiedenis in Nederland sinds 1860* (Amsterdam, 1990); R. Smit, *Fruin en de partijen tijdens de Republiek* (Groningen, 1958); P. Geyl, "Democratische Tendenties in 1672," in *Pennestrijd over Staat en Historie. Opstellen over de Vaderlandse Geschiedenis aangevuld met Geyl's levensverhaal* (Groningen, 1971); Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 29–32; H.H. Rowen, "The Historical Work of Pieter Geyl," *The Journal of Modern History* 37, no. 1 (1965); H.L. Wesseling, "Pieter Geyl: een groot Nederlands historicus," in *Onder Historici. Opstellen over geschiedenis en geschiedschrijving* (Amsterdam, 1995); I.J.H. Worst, "De laatste Loevesteiner. Liberalisme en nationalisme bij Pieter Geyl (1887–1966)," *BMGN* 99, no. 2 (1984).

stadholder during the summer of 1672, they also opposed several Orangist campaigns. For example, the Dutch people rejected the Orangist plan to appoint the prince of Orange to the sovereign office of count after the murders of Johan and Cornelis de Witt.

Faction

It is therefore incorrect to summarize the events of 1672 simply as a dispute between Orangists and adherents of the True Freedom. In the 1960s, researchers demonstrated that many of the hundreds of regents who were replaced during and shortly after 1672 in Holland, Zeeland, Friesland, Gelderland, Overijssel and Utrecht had not been adherents of the True Freedom at all. Moreover, a large number of regents who had been on excellent terms with Johan de Witt remained in office. Historians discovered that forces other than two political parties fighting each other had been at play in 1672. Revisionist historians reconstructed the ties that bound local office holders to one another. It appeared that the struggle for political power between different local conglomerates of extended families determined how the offices were filled.⁵⁹

Even this approach (specialists speak of faction politics) left several questions unanswered. If politics was the playing field of elites only, why did 'normal' citizens revolt against their own governors in dozens of cities in 1672? According to revisionists, these citizens had been put up to rioting by local faction leaders who grabbed their chances during the chaos and tried to get rid of their political adversaries by controlling riotous crowds. Citizens did not have any independent political role to play in this story.⁶⁰ This revisionist story meshed closely with the presuppositions of elites. Historian J.R.J. Cambier, who based his study exclusively on sources generated by governmental bodies, described the months July, August and September 1672 – a period with one of the highest peaks in pamphlet output in early modern European history, a political murder, numerous riots

⁵⁹ Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 32–36. Cf. G. de Bruin, "De geschiedschrijving over de Gouden Eeuw," in *Kantelend geschiedbeeld. Nederlandse historiografie sinds 1945*, ed. W.W. Mijnhardt, Aula Paperback (Utrecht, 1983); M. van der Bijl, *Idee en Interest. Voorgeschiedenis, verloop en achtergronden van de politieke twisten in Zeeland en vooral in Middelburg tussen 1702 en 1715* (Groningen, 1981). Cf. P. Dreiskämper, *Redeloos, radeloos, reddeloos. De geschiedenis van het rampjaar 1672* (Hilversum, 1998), 77–85.

⁶⁰ Cf. A. Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (New York, 2002), 2–9. Cf. T. Harris, "Introduction," in *The Politics of the Excluded, 1500–1850*, ed. T. Harris (New York/Basingstoke, 2001).

and large-scale political purification in dozens of cities, a moment of “complete demoralisation” as Jonathan Israel has called it – as “remarkably calm”.⁶¹

Additional Explanation

The two stories about the Year of Disaster (party and faction) both sound reasonable to a certain extent. William III was immensely popular in 1672. And powerful local politicians were indeed scheming behind the scenes. Still, these accounts are incomplete and need additional explanation.⁶² Dutchmen revolted against their own governors in 1672 because they had their own grievances.⁶³ They did not need a prince or factions to rationalise their anger. Dutch citizens had seen with their own eyes that several regents had made capital mistakes during the preparations for war, which means that the simultaneous attacks by France, Munster and Cologne (with English support at sea) had such devastating consequences. Dutchmen had resisted and fought back in a small number of places, but in the majority of cities and villages inhabitants surrendered without resistance. According to several reports, in some places the city keys had been presented to the enemy with a handshake and a smile. News about these “cowardly, treacherous events” reached the remaining free Dutchmen even faster than the thousands of refugees who had fled the east and were heading for the free provinces of Holland, Zeeland and Friesland. These reports and the sight of the refugees convinced the citizens in the free provinces that there had been foul play. How else could more than fifty cities and villages fall into enemy hands within a month? Had not the regents, and Johan de Witt in particular, always favoured France? And

⁶¹ J.R.J.Ph. Cambier, *De jaren 1672 en 1673* (Den Helder, 1916). Cf. J. Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence in the English Revolution. The Colchester Plunderers* (Cambridge, 1999); Wood, *Riot*, 134–135.

⁶² Most recent literature has not moved past traditional explanations. Cf. L. Panhuysen, *Rampjaar 1672. Hoe de republiek aan de ondergang ontsnapte* (Amsterdam, 2009); J. Blokker et al., *Nederland in twaalf moorden. Niets zo veranderlijk als onze identiteit* (Amsterdam/ Antwerp, 2008), 121–135.

⁶³ Cf. R. von Friedeburg, “Urban Riots and the Perspective of ‘Qualification for Office’: The Peculiarities of Urban Government and the Case of the 1672 Disturbances in the Netherlands,” in *Public Offices, Private Demands: Capability in Governance in the 17th-century Dutch Republic*, ed. J. Hartman, J. Nieuwstraten and M. Reinders (Newcastle, 2009), 22–52; M. Reinders, “Burghers, Orangists and ‘Good Government’. Popular Political Opposition During the ‘Year of Disaster’ 1672 in Dutch Pamphlets,” *The Seventeenth Century* 23, no. 2 (2008): 315–346.

what had happened to the tax income that should have been used to pay for the defence of the Republic? Soon, regents were suspected of treason. This is why citizens in Middelburg beat up their local regents in front of city hall in broad daylight. This is why citizens in Amsterdam threw stones at their burgomasters (Amsterdam had four) in the Kalverstraat. And this is why citizens in Leeuwarden surrounded their own city hall for several days, holding the local government hostage.

The number of riots and upheavals exploded in the last days of August in nearly all cities. Under the influence of an unprecedented number of pamphlets blaming Dutch politicians for the terrible state of the Republic, thousands of Dutchmen in dozens of cities simultaneously revolted against their own regents. It was print-fuelled pandemonium. Regents had to run for their lives. Some of them fled the country, only making the situation worse for those who stayed. "Who runs is guilty" became a popular catchphrase. The Dutch Republic was on fire. A year of war became a year of disaster. Johan and Cornelis de Witt decided not to flee. They paid for this decision with their lives.

Pamphlets: "The Next Best Thing to an Opinion Poll"

Pamphlets were the engine that set the riotous movement in motion and gave it its destructive speed and strength. These political publications flooded the Republic in impressive numbers and various forms. In 1672 a little over 1600 different pamphlets were published. They appeared in editions ranging in size between 500 and 1500. In total, between 800,000 and 2.4 million pamphlets were published in 1672. For some perspective: in 1566 – also known as the year of disaster of the sixteenth century – twenty-one pamphlets appeared.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ A. Duke, "Dissident Propaganda and Political Organisation at the Outbreak of the Revolt of the Netherlands," in *Reformation, Revolt and Civil War in France and the Netherlands 1555–1585*, ed. P. Benedict et al. (Amsterdam, 1999), 124. During the nineteenth century – the age of collecting – several Dutchmen gathered and described collections of pamphlets. Bookseller Frederic Muller (1817–1881) started collecting pamphlets in 1848. In 1863 he had finished his collection, just under 10,000 in number, which was meant for sale, not for the advancement of knowledge. Between 1851 and 1861 the description of his collection was published by P.A. Tiele. P.T. Tiele, *Bibliotheek van Nederlandsche pamfletten* (Amsterdam, 1858). Isaac Meulman, an Amsterdam sugar merchant, noticed in the 1860s that he had collected many pamphlets that were not listed in Muller's collection. He had Johannes van der Wulp describe his collection, which counted 19,000 pamphlets, of which 9,400 were not listed in Tiele's description. J. Van der Wulp, *Catalogus van de tractaten, pamfletten, enz. over de geschiedenis van Nederland, aanwezig in de bibliotheek van Isaac*

Pamphlets hold a central position in this book.⁶⁵ The reason is simple: commentators from 1672, both Dutch and foreign, agreed about the crucial role that these publications had played. This was not an exclusively Dutch phenomenon. Arguably, all major political events in early modern western Europe were accompanied by floods of pamphlets, including the (German) Reformation, the French Fronde and the English Civil War. That the Dutch Republic was, however, something of a forerunner is illustrated by an English pamphleteer who complained in the wake of the Civil War about the “Amsterdamnification by several opinions” of England.⁶⁶ Craig Harline has even argued that Dutch pamphlets “represent the next best thing to a seventeenth century opinion poll”.⁶⁷

There was, however, no such thing as *the* pamphlet in the early modern Dutch Republic. There is even some difficulty in translating the Dutch word *pamflet* into the English word pamphlet. Whereas the English

Meulman (Amsterdam, 1868). Both of these Amsterdam collections are currently located in the University Library in Gent. Another collection from Amsterdam, that of Rogge, who specialised in religious publications, stayed in Amsterdam. H.C. Rogge, *Beschrijvende catalogus der pamfletten-verzameling van de boekerij der Remonstrantsche kerk te Amsterdam* (Amsterdam, 1862). In 1882, the Leiden collection of Johannes Thysius was described by Petit. The collection counted 18,000 pamphlets of which 9000 had not been described in the previous collections. L.D. Petit, and H.J.A. Ruys, *Bibliotheek van nederlandsche pamfletten. Verzamelingen van de bibliotheek van Joannes Thysius* ('s-Gravenhage/Leiden, 1882). Ten years later a collection in Zeeland was described and published by Broekema. Meanwhile Knuttel had begun to order and describe several pamphlet collections that resided in The Hague: the Bibliotheca Duncania, which was the stadholderate collection that had been originally collected by Joan Duncan (1690–1753), the collection of G.J. Gérardin and the collection Romswinkel, also known as the White Collection (not for its content, but for its white covers). Knuttel started publishing the description of this huge collection in 1889 and finished with the register in 1920. The Knuttel collection counts 32,000 pamphlets. W.P.C. Knuttel, *Catalogus van de pamfletten-verzameling berustende in de Koninklijke bibliotheek. Bewerkt, met aantekeningen en een register der schrijvers voorzien* ('s Gravenhage, 1889). Also see J.F. van Someren, *Pamfletten niet voorkomende in afzonderlijk gedrukte catalogi der verzamelingen in andere openbare nederlandsche bibliotheken* (Utrecht, 1915); G. van Alphen, *Catalogus der pamfletten van de Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit te Groningen* (Groningen, 1944); W.C. Zijlstra, *Den Zeusen Beesem. Catalogus van de Nederlandse pamfletten (alsmede de niet-Zeeuwse plakaten en ordonnanties) tot en met 1795, aanwezig in de Zeeuwse Bibliotheek* (Middelburg, 1994); M.W. Huiskamp, P.J. Boon and R.L.M.M. Camps, *Catalogus van de pamfletten aanwezig in de Bibliotheek Arnhem 1537–1795* (Hilversum, 1995).

⁶⁵ Cf. F. Deen, D. Onnekink and M. Reinders, *Pamphlets and Politics* (Leiden, 2010).

⁶⁶ J. Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers. Propaganda during the English Civil Wars and Interregnum* (Aldershot, 2004), 315. Cf. J.M. Hayden, “The Uses of Political Pamphlets. The Example of 1614–15 in France,” *Canadian Journal of History/Annales Canadiennes d'Histoire* 21, no. 2 (1986): 143.

⁶⁷ C.E. Harline, “Mars Bruised: Images of War in the Dutch Republic, 1641–1648,” *BMGN* 104, no. 2 (1989): 190.

pamphlet is a specific type of publication, the Dutch word refers to all popular publications. It is telling that the English had been using “pamphlet” ever since the late sixteenth century, while the Dutch *pamflet* appeared only in the nineteenth century.⁶⁸ Until then, these publications went by many names such as *libellen* (libels), *maren* (tidings), *paskwillen* (pasquils), *blauwboexkens* (little blue books), *briefjes* (letters) or *boekjes* (booklets), and they appeared in many different forms such as songs, edicts, poems, petitions, letters, woodcuts, broadsides, ballads, news stories, political tracts, sermons, treatises and dialogues.

The semantic ambiguity surrounding Dutch pamphlets has caused great – and unresolved – debates about the true definition of a pamphlet, resulting in the conclusion that we cannot assign a unique property to this type of publication.⁶⁹ Pamphlets were short, but there is no consensus on how many pages it takes to distinguish a pamphlet from a book.⁷⁰ They were cheap, but prices differed greatly, depending on pamphlet forms or the time and place that these publications were published and sold.⁷¹

⁶⁸ E.M.A. Timmer “Pamfletten en perikelen,” in *Koninklijke Bibliotheek gedenkboek 1798–1948*, ed. L. Brummel (The Hague, 1948), 199–218; M. Meijer Drees, “Nederlandse pamfletten (ca.1600–1750) als bron voor de literatuurgeschiedenis,” *Tydskrif vir Nederlands & Afrikaans* 8 (2001); J. Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 2003), 4–11.

⁶⁹ Cf. P. Verkruijsse, “‘Gedruckt in seghwaer, op de pars der lijdtzaamheyt.’ Boekwetenschap en pamfletliteratuur,” in *Het lange leven van het pamflet*, ed. De Kruif, Meijer Drees and Salman, 31–33; L.H.M. Wessels, “Het pamflet. De polsslag van het heden,” in *De Palimpsest. Geschiedschrijving in de Nederlanden 1500–2000*, ed. J. Tollebeek, T. Verschaffel and L.H.M. Wessels (Hilversum, 2002); G. van Alphen, “Inleiding,” *Catalogus der Pamfletten. Van de Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit te Groningen 1542–1853* (Groningen, 1944); P.J. Blok, “Wat is een pamflet?” *Het Boek* 5, no. 1 (1916); H. van der Hoeven, “Verzamelaars en pamfletten,” in *Catalogus van de pamfletten-verzameling berustende in de Koninklijke Bibliotheek. Herdruk, met handgeschreven verbeteringen, aanvullingen en varianten*, ed. W.P.C. Knuttel (Utrecht, 1978); M. van Otegem, “Tijd, snelheid, afstand; de mechanica van het pamflet,” *De zeventiende eeuw* 17, no. 1 (2001); W.P. van Stockum, “Verboden boeken – Wat is een pamflet?,” *Het Boek* 6, no. 2 (1917); D.J.H. Ter Horst, “Over het begrip pamflet,” *Bibliotheekleven* 7 (1932); J.S. Theissen, “Pamfletten,” *Bibliotheekleven* (1927); E.M.A. Timmer, “Pamfletten en perikelen”; V. van Zuilen, “Bronnen van identiteit. Het algemeen Nederlands saamhorigheidsgevoel in enkele pamfletten over de Nederlandse Opstand,” in *Het lange leven van het pamflet*, ed. Jose de Kruif et al. (Hilversum, 2006).

⁷⁰ R. de Graaf and J. de Kruif, “Schieten met papieren schroot. Pamfletten en dagbladers in de negentiende eeuw,” in *Het lange leven van het pamflet*, ed. De Kruif et al., 95; A. Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print. Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1997), 3; M. van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt 1555–1590* (Cambridge, 2002), 288; Raymond, *Pamphlets*, 82.

⁷¹ P. Verkruijsse, “De verspreiding van populaire literatuur,” in *Nederlandse Literatuur, een geschiedenis*, ed. M.A. Schenkeveld-Van der Dussen (Groningen, 1993); B. van Selm, “... te bekomen voor een civielen prijs’. De Nederlandse boekprijs in de zeventiende eeuw als onbekende grootheid,” *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 6 (1990); P.G. Hoftijzer, *Engelse boekverkopers*

They were mostly printed, but recent research tends to incorporate manuscript publications into the story of popular communication.⁷² They were often written in the vernacular, but anyone who has ever flipped through a pamphlet catalogue will have noticed the many Latin, French, English, German and Italian publications.⁷³

One way to solve this problem of definition has been to take the audience instead of the publication as the determining factor of what constitutes a pamphlet.⁷⁴ Supposedly, pamphlets were popular.⁷⁵ They were in fact meant for a broad, but by no means unrestricted, audience. In the determination of pamphlet audiences, the price of the medium has traditionally played an important part. It has often been claimed that pamphlets were meant to be as cheap as possible as they were aimed at “the common people” or, even more vaguely, “the simple folk”.⁷⁶ There is little evidence that directly supports this claim. Pamphlets were probably not expensive, but determining what was cheap and what was expensive is without meaning if we do not take geography, religion, gender, literacy, social cohesion and interest into consideration. Put simply: a pamphlet was not only directed at those who could afford to buy such a publication, but the pamphlet should also be available, readable and intelligible, and the reader should have a desire to buy and read it. All these audience-based characteristics point in the direction of pamphleteering as an urban, middle-class, civic undertaking. The Dutch Republic – highly urbanised with high levels of literacy, wages and (indirect) political participation accompanied by a large number of presses and publishers and a lack of successful censorship – was a genuine pamphlet state. The Dutch Revolt

bij de Beurs. De geschiedenis van de Amsterdamse boekhandels Bruyning en Swart (1637–1725) (Amsterdam/Maarssen, 1987), 71.

⁷² Raymond, *Pamphlets*, 123; H.J. Martin, *The History and Power of Writing* (Chicago/London, 1994).

⁷³ P.A.M. Geurts, *De Nederlandse Opstand in de pamfletten 1566–1584* (Nijmegen, 1956), 259.

⁷⁴ For this approach see Harline, *Pamphlets*, 25.

⁷⁵ Geurts, *De Nederlandse Opstand*, 259; Verkruysse, “De verspreiding”; Harline, *Pamphlets*, 63–70. Cf. Scribner, “Is a History of Popular Culture Possible?”; T. Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety* (Cambridge, 1991); T. Harris, “Introduction,” in *The Politics of the Excluded*, ed. Harris; Peacey, *Politicians*, 319.

⁷⁶ J.F. van Someren, “Voorbericht,” in *Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit te Utrecht. Pamfletten niet voorkomende in afzonderlijk gedrukte catalogi der verzamelingen in andere openbare Nederlandsche bibliotheken*, ed. J.F. van Someren (Utrecht, 1915–1922); Van Zuilen, “Bronnen van identiteit,” 73–74; A. Th. van Deursen, *Mensen van klein vermogen. Het ‘kopergeld’ van de Gouden Eeuw* (Amsterdam, 1999). Cf. Harris, “Propaganda and Public Opinion,” in *Media and Revolution*, ed. Popkin (Lexington, 1995); Van Otegem, “Tijd, snelheid, afstand,” 53; Wessels, “Het pamflet,” 85; Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk*.

has rightly been labelled “the first propaganda war of the early modern period”.⁷⁷

These pamphlets reflected interests of different groups in the political arena. This does not mean that pamphlets revealed all the interests, grievances or ideas of all individuals who were involved in politics. There was, for example, no such thing as an actual Orangist party in 1672 pamphlets. There were, however, Orangist pamphleteers, who most likely read each other's work, maybe even planned joint actions, and produced pamphlet campaigns. The same goes for pamphleteers who supported the ideas of the True Freedom and pamphleteers who supported angry citizens. The interests of citizens are found in demands and grievances in printed petitions, but also in pamphlets whose writers and publishers anticipated the interests of their audience, which consisted mostly of middle groups in society. After all, pamphlets had to be sold.⁷⁸

Politics of the People

This book is part of a tradition in historiography that believes political debates between governments and people had great influence on (political) events.⁷⁹ It is still largely unclear, however, how this relationship

⁷⁷ R. Esser, “‘Concordia res Parave Crescunt’. Regional Histories and the Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Public Opinion and Changing Identities in the Early Modern Netherlands. Essays in Honour of Alastair Duke*, ed. J. Pollmann, and A. Spicer (Leiden/Boston, 2007), 231. Cf. Geurts, *De Nederlandse opstand*.

⁷⁸ R. Harms, “Handel in Letteren. Ambulante handel in actueel drukwerk in zeventiende-eeuws Amsterdam,” *De zeventiende eeuw* 23 no. 2 (2007), 216–229; J. Salman, “Het nieuws op straat. Actueel drukwerk in het vroegmoderne distributienetwerk,” in *Het lange leven van het pamflet*, ed. De Kruif et al., 56–67; K. Sharpe and S. Zwicker, “Introduction. Refiguring Revolutions,” in *Refiguring Revolutions. Aesthetics and Politics from the English Revolution to the Romantic Revolution*, ed. Sharpe and Zwicker (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 1996), 9–10; G.C. Gibbs, “Press and Public Opinion: Prospective,” in *Liberty Secured? Britain before and after 1688*, ed. J.R. Jones (Stanford, 1992), 29; Harris, “Introduction”; Peacey, *Politicians*; M. Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation in Later Stuart Britain. Partisanship and Political Culture* (Oxford, 2005); Raymond, *Pamphlets*; J.K. Sawyer, *Printed Poison. Pamphlet Propaganda, Faction Politics and the Public Sphere in Early Seventeenth-Century France* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/Oxford, 1990).

⁷⁹ M. Knights, *Representation*; T.C.M. Blanning, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture. Old Regime Europe 1660–1789* (New York, 2002); E. Palmen, *Kaat Mossel, helleveeg van Rotterdam. Volk en Verlichting in de achttiende eeuw* (Amsterdam, 2009); J. Walter, *Crowds and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2006); T. Harris (ed.), *The Politics of the Excluded 1500–1850* (New York/Basingstoke, 2001); P. Knevel, “De politiek op straat. Over de vormen van stedelijk protest in de zeventiende eeuw,” *Groniek* 31 (1997), 402–416; Van Nierop, “Private Interests,” 33–39; idem, “Popular Participation in Politics in the Dutch Republic,” in *Resistance, Representation and Community*, ed. P. Blickle (Oxford, 1997), 272–290; J.D. Popkin, “Media and Revolutionary Crises,” in *Media and Revolution*,

between communication and political influence actually operated in the early modern period. Jürgen Habermas has offered one of the most dominant answers to this problem with his so-called public sphere. The German philosopher wondered under what conditions an open political discussion could come into being.⁸⁰ For Habermas a public sphere was in effect when three conditions were met. Firstly, every individual had to have access to the arena of public opinion. This also meant that everyone had to be informed, so censorship should be weak or ineffective. Secondly, Habermas claimed that this public sphere could not serve the interests of any particular group or individual; he had in mind a public sphere where everyone expressed his “real” opinion. Lastly, authority in the public sphere was determined by reason, not status. Every participant in this public sphere was in effect equal. Instead of the smartest rhetoric or the most cunning political propaganda, the best argument should win a debate in the public sphere. For Habermas, the public sphere first emerged in England in the early eighteenth century, after its predecessor, the representational culture of the courts, had outlived its usefulness.⁸¹

Habermas's study, which was published in German in 1962 but became influential internationally only after the publication of an English translation in 1989, has received much attention. Tim Blanning called it “the most influential academic dissertation ever to appear in print”. Joad Raymond labelled it “the most influential model of popular debate and public opinion”. Harold Mah called the revival of Habermas after its translation “one of the most significant historiographical developments of the last decade”. According to Steven Pincus, “Jürgen Habermas has become the social theoretical pop star of early modernists”.⁸²

Habermas's thesis has also met with some objections.⁸³ Using the term public sphere loosely, as has been often done, results in a confusion

ed. J. Popkin (Lexington, 1995) 12–30; L. Jardine, *Going Dutch. How England Plundered Holland's glory* (London/New York, 2008); P. Burke, *What is Cultural History?* (Cambridge, 2004).

⁸⁰ J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, 1989), 35.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 34–59.

⁸² Blanning, *The Culture of Power*, 6; J. Raymond, “The Newspaper, Public Opinion, and the Public Sphere in the Seventeenth Century,” in *News, Newspapers, and Society in Early Modern Britain*, ed. J. Raymond (London/Portland, 1999), 109–110; H. Mah, “Phantasies of the Public Sphere: Rethinking the Habermas of Historians,” *The Journal of Modern History* 72, no. 1 (2000): 153; S. Pincus, “The State and Civil Society in Early Modern England: Capitalism, Causation and Habermas's Bourgeois Public Sphere,” in *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England*, ed. P. Lake and S. Pincus (Manchester, 2007), 225.

⁸³ K.M. Baker, “Politics and Public Opinion under the Old Regime: Some Reflections,” in *Press and Politics in Pre-Revolutionary France*, ed. J. Censer and J. Popkin (Berkeley, 1987),

of tongues.⁸⁴ Take the Dutch Republic for example. The three conditions that Habermas has articulated do not pertain fully. Not everyone could participate in public political debate. Pamphlets were always used by groups to promote their interests. This meant that very few expressed the real opinion of individuals (assuming that one can measure “real opinion” at all). Similarly, debates were not judged solely on the merits of the separate arguments. The status of the group or individual making the argument was of huge importance, and pamphleteers and propagandists understood this very well. The public debate was far from being as “influence free” as Habermas envisioned. Propaganda was an important part of all communication between government and governed.⁸⁵

Citizens functioned as an audience (i.e. administrators sought the favour of a citizen public), but they were also authors and producers

213; J. van Horn Melton, “Introduction. What is the public sphere?” in *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge, 2001), 10–15; Sawyer, *Printed Poison*; K. Sharpe, and S.N. Zwicker, “Introduction: Discovering the Renaissance Reader,” in *Reading, Society and Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. K. Sharpe and S.N. Zwicker (Cambridge, 2003); C. Calhoun, “Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere,” in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. C. Calhoun (Cambridge, MA/London, 1992); E.H. Shagan, “The Pilgrimage of Grace and the Public Sphere?” in *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England*, ed. Lake and Pincus (Manchester, 2007), 32; Pincus, “The State and Civil Society,” 216. Habermas himself admitted his “empirical shortfalls” in retrospect. J. Habermas, “Further Reflections on the Public Sphere,” in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. C. Calhoun (Cambridge, 1992).

⁸⁴ H. Barker, and S. Burrows, “Introduction,” in *Press, Politics and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America 1760–1820*, ed. Barker and Burrows (Cambridge, 2002), 2; P. Lake, and M. Questier, “Puritans, Papists, and the ‘Public Sphere’ in Early Modern England: The Edmund Campion Affair in Context,” *The Journal of Modern History* 72, no. 3 (2000): 590; P. Hammer, “The Smiling Crocodile: The Earl of Essex and Late Elizabethan ‘Popularity,’” in *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England*, ed. Lake and Pincus (Manchester, 2007); J. Pollmann, and A. Spicer, “Introduction,” in *Public Opinion and Changing Identities in the Early Modern Netherlands. Essays in Honour of Alastair Duke*, ed. Pollmann and Spicer (Leiden/Boston, 2007). Cf. Raymond, “The Newspaper, Public Opinion, and the Public Sphere,” 9–11; Shagan, “The Pilgrimage of Grace,” 32; *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere*, ed. J.M. Roberts and N. Crossley (Oxford, 2004); T. Harris, “‘Venerating the Honesty of a Thinker’: The King’s Friends and the Battle for the Allegiance of the Common People in Restoration England,” in *The Politics of the Excluded*, 221; Mah, “Phantasies of the Public Sphere,” 166.

⁸⁵ S. Achinstein, *Milton and the Revolutionary Reader* (Princeton, NJ, 1994), 9; Calhoun, “Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere,” 1–2; Mah, “Phantasies of the Public Sphere”; Raymond, “The Newspaper, Public Opinion, and the Public Sphere,” 120; A.J. La Vopa, “Conceiving a Public: Ideas and Society in Eighteenth-Century Europe,” *The Journal of Modern History* 64, no. 1 (1992): 168; Shagan, “The Pilgrimage of Grace,” 33, 52; K. Loveman, “Political Information in the Seventeenth Century,” *The Historical Journal* 48, no. 2 (2005): 565. Cf. M. Knights, “How Rational was the Later Stuart Public Sphere?” in *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England*.

of pamphlets.⁸⁶ Government took these (collective) opinions seriously. While the idea of a public sphere is appealing because it recognises the central role of communication between government and governed and refuses to reserve politics for elites only, it is too restricted to be applicable to the Dutch Republic. Instead of talking about a public sphere, for the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century, it is more accurate to speak of a popular political culture wherein government used propaganda to influence the (civic) audience but wherein government was also itself influenced by public opinion that was constructed by this audience.⁸⁷ As such, this book also presents an argument about public opinion.

Public Opinion

There are broadly speaking two notions of public opinion: public opinion as a single force in society (old) and public opinion as an accumulation of individual opinions (new). The old notion considers public opinion as a force in society that is more than the sum of its parts. This is the kind of public opinion that throws over governments, sets societies on alight and once in motion can rage through a region like a monster. It is measured mostly by analysing political debates (in various media) and oppositional actions such as demonstrations and revolts. Old public opinion by definition goes beyond the individual. Think of the public opinion that inspired the Reformation, the public opinion that set England on fire during the Civil War and the public opinion that ushered in the French Revolution.⁸⁸

The new notion of public opinion is the clinical counterpart of the old notion. New public opinion is the product of charts and figures. It is the outcome of opinion polls and as such a phenomenon of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. New public opinion is by definition – and literally – a product of individual opinion. It says nothing about the opinion of a

⁸⁶ Frijhoff, 1650, 218.

⁸⁷ Cf. Knights, *Representation*, 5; J. Peacey, "The Print Culture of Parliament, 1600–1800," in *The Print Culture of Parliament, 1600–1800*, ed. J. Peacey (Edinburgh, 2007), 10.

⁸⁸ S. Splichal, *Public Opinion. Developments and Controversies in the Twentieth Century* (New York/Oxford, 1999); V. Price, *Public Opinion* (Newbury Park, 1992); J.R. Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (Cambridge, 1992); A. Asa Berger (ed.) *Political Culture and Public Opinion* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1989); C. den Boer and H. 't Hart, *Publieke opinie* (Bussum, 2007); M. Ozouf, "'Public Opinion' at the End of the Old Regime," *The Journal of Modern History* 60 (1988); A van Dixhoorn, *De stem des volks* (Den Haag, 2006); J. Raymond, "The Newspaper, Public Opinion, and the Public Sphere," 109–140; A. Briggs and P. Burke, *A Social History of the Media. From Gutenberg to the Internet* (Malden, 2009); Baker, "Politics and Public Opinion".

public (think of a demonstration) or publicly exclaimed opinions (think of a man on a soapbox). It is an individual's opinion about a public subject, or as Jean Paul Sartre mockingly called it, "the serialization of individuals".⁸⁹

Ever since the introduction and surging popularity of polls to measure public opinion, the old notion of public opinion as a force in society has lost much of its appeal for scholars. According to Slavko Splichal, historians turned away from the messy relationships between debates and events and started to focus on questions that could be answered through questionnaires and interviews. "A growing interest in the public opinion phenomenon in the twentieth century correlates with a widespread disenchantment with traditional 'philosophical' approaches to public opinion, which dominated the period between the seventeenth and early twentieth centuries, and the rise of public opinion polling", wrote Splichal. He has labelled this the "anti-intellectual turn" in public opinion research.⁹⁰ In this book, I want to turn the spotlight on the old notion of public opinion once again.

Capability

One of the main issues that was debated in 1672 – and therefore the subject of public opinion – was a seemingly simple question: who governed the Republic? The answer was not simple at all. As was commonly accepted in early modern Europe, men had to be qualified by appropriate virtues to govern. Members of certain families could more easily be expected to possess these virtues than others. Since regents and other magistrates in the Republic did not, in general, hold their office by inheritance, but by representation of the corporate entity in question, this assumption played a particularly important role.⁹¹ For example, Pieter de La Court concluded in his *Consideratien en Exempelen van Staat* of 1660 that the common citizens and the rabble were not supposed to contribute anything to politics, which was the realm of regents only.⁹² De la Court was writing at a time when kings in Europe were trying to enlarge their political power at the

⁸⁹ Splichal, *Public Opinion*, 28.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, ix.

⁹¹ R. von Friedeburg, "Introduction," in *Murder and Monarchy: Regicide in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (c. 1300–1800) (Basingstoke, 2004).

⁹² J. de la Court and P. de la Court, *Consideratien en Exempelen van Staat, omtrent de Fundamenten van allerley Regeringe* (Amsterdam, 1660), 367.

cost of their subjects. In the Republic, however, centralisation of power was obstructed by three circumstances.⁹³ First of all, citizens governed as a corporate entity, but as individuals, most of them had to obey as subjects. Secondly, the magistrates did not personally own the state (although the prince of Orange had some personal properties in Zeeland and Holland) but had to obey its offices. Lastly, if things went wrong, the issue of accountability arose, and the most capable citizens could take action. Arguments about government thus revolved around questions of obedience, responsibility, resistance and capability.⁹⁴ In the end the public debate in pamphlets was about who was able to rule, not about the fact that some obeyed and others ruled. It was no coincidence that even radical 1672 pamphleteers (often angry citizens) hardly ever demanded to rule themselves, but demanded instead that new regents be *bequam*, which meant capable.⁹⁵

Capability was an elusive term. It encompassed many personal properties such as wisdom, experience, and judgement, but it also included having the proper (family) relations (faction) and the correct political ideology (party). Party and faction were only a part of the total claim to be capable governors. Regents had to live up to public expectations and be good rulers, and they were held accountable for their actions. In political practice, this meant that in times of crisis when good governance was lacking, city magistrates might be forced to account for the expenditure of taxes or to fight in the city militia side by side with the other *burghers*. Riotous citizens simply demanded controllable government, which explained in part the early success of the prince of Orange in 1672. He was initially supported by citizens because he was described, based on his heritage, as “naturally the most capable”.⁹⁶

It is no surprise that a system that leaned on consent from middle groups in society produced a large amount of governmental propaganda. This governmental propaganda was countered by propaganda from political opposition, but also by publications from citizens who produced their pamphlets collectively or as individuals. One of the most powerful (and

⁹³ M. 't Hart, “The Dutch Republic: The Urban Impact upon Politics”.

⁹⁴ Cf. S. Stevin, *Het Burgherlick Leven. Vita Politica* (Utrecht, 2001). Cf. Condren, “Liberty of Office”.

⁹⁵ *Remonstrantie Aen Sijn Hoogheyt Den Heere Prince Van Orange* (1672), Van der Wulp 4869, 3.

⁹⁶ P. de Huybert, *Verdediging Van De Oude Hollantsche Regeringh* (1672), Knuttel 9970a.

most traditional) tools in the hands of these citizens was a particular kind of pamphlet: the printed petition.

Petitions

Petitioning, a custom long before 1672, was in essence a sign of obedience, because the petitioner recognised the government to which he sent his request as having authority over him. The men who *published* petitions, however, did something else. They put authority in the hands of an anonymous audience and consequently removed authority (or part of it) from government. Normally, such a *rekest* or *request*, as the Dutch called them, would be handed over to the government in manuscript. After the *request-meester* had decided what to do with it, the demands were returned to the supplicants. An audience was not involved.⁹⁷ In 1672, this practice changed. Now, petitions were published in abundant number and presented to an anonymous audience. These petitions were accompanied by pamphlets that argued in favour of the citizens' cause and formed a theoretical justification for their behaviour. Taken together, we could say that these publications form an exemplary case of civic propaganda.

Recently, David Zaret has argued that printed petitions set in motion a change in political communication from a practice based on secrecy and privilege to an open system based on the authority of public opinion that ushered in democratic culture.⁹⁸ In the Dutch Republic in the late seventeenth century printed petitions did something different. Indeed, their introduction led to a political culture with a high level of popular participation that at times called for radical political reform but was at the same time exclusive, bigoted, xenophobic and in many ways conservative. The people who were most active during the 1670s and 1680s – those citizens who actually did the rioting and who came up with petitions – shared a political ideology that was based on the idea of a contract between regents and governed. This idea of a political contract, however, was not only rooted in a philosophical debate about the origins of government with its mythical, political bond.⁹⁹ It was also based on actual contracts, most importantly on the oath that citizens had to take at the city hall, promising

⁹⁷ H. van Nierop, "Private interests," 33–39.

⁹⁸ Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture*. Cf. Knights, *Representation*.

⁹⁹ Cf. A.J. Simmons, "Theories of the State," in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. D. Rutherford (Cambridge, 2006), 250–274.

to fulfil certain duties in exchange for their rights and privileges.¹⁰⁰ Given a choice, these citizens favoured inequality over equality. Considerable parts of society (non-citizens, the rabble) were deemed incapable of taking part in politics or of even participating in political debate. One had to be part of the political contract to have a voice in politics. As a consequence, none of the citizens who published pamphlets showed an outspoken preference for democratic freedom or equality. Instead, they argued for a proper execution of the political structure of the Dutch Republic wherein the power of the regents, who only represented sovereignty, was kept within bounds by the combined power of the citizens and the stadholder.¹⁰¹

Print and Petitions

Using petitions as a source for history is problematic because, as historians have rightly suggested, petitions could be tools in the hands of politicians, used to influence decisions and justify policy. The drafting of petitions could have been “encouraged from above” or they could simply have been made up by pamphleteers. We know of the existence of such mock petitions. Moreover, these mock petitions could have appeared on the market simply to make money.¹⁰² Petitions could indeed reflect public opinion, but they could also pose as public opinion in order to manipulate the citizenry.¹⁰³ Several Dutch petitions from 1672 that were put on the market were not published by the men who had originally written them. Instead, politicians who had agreed to (some of the) demands published these documents to flaunt their cooperation with violent, popular movements. In doing so, these politicians not only empowered the petitioning citizens, they also scored points at the expense of those of their colleagues who had not granted demands. This feature of petitioning – “creating the other” – stimulated partisanship in politics, as Mark Knights has remarked.¹⁰⁴

Luckily, in defining a petition there is no need to use a strict dichotomy between propaganda schemes that were meant to deceive the audience,

¹⁰⁰ Cf. C. Condren, *Argument and Authority* (Cambridge, 2005).

¹⁰¹ Van Nierop, “Private interests”; J. Pollmann, “Eendracht maakt macht. Stedelijke cultuuridealen en politieke werkelijkheid in de Republiek,” in *Harmonie in Holland. Het pol-dermodel van 1500 tot nu*, ed. D. Bos, M. Ebben and H. te Velde (Amsterdam, 2007), 134–151.

¹⁰² Peacey, *Politicians*, 252; Zaret, *Origins*, 233.

¹⁰³ Zaret, *Origins*, 220–228; T. Harris, “Propaganda and Public Opinion,” 66.

¹⁰⁴ Knights, *Representation*.

on one side, and those that were a reflection of actual debates in society, on the other. Obviously, there are examples of both in early modern history, and the groupings are by no means exclusive. To make sense of these different functions of the petition, we have to distinguish between printed petitions and petitions that were written in manuscript. The latter consisted exclusively of citizens' demands, but had little effect outside the locality in which they were filed, because they were, as far as historical evidence shows, hardly ever distributed on a larger scale. On the contrary, they were returned to the people who had filed them after government had decided how to respond to the grievances they contained. Printed petitions were spread more widely. They also ran a greater risk of being abused by governments. Still, this abuse should not be overrated for the Dutch context. Most petitions that were published, even if they were put on the market by governmental bodies, were literal translations from the original manuscript editions.¹⁰⁵ Out of a body of nearly fifty printed petitions in 1672, only two had mock versions.¹⁰⁶ So while evidence of false petitions exists, which supports the argument that governments believed in the power of the political audience, this evidence does not convincingly prove that petitions were produced by Dutch governments on such a large scale that we should discount them as reflections of debates in society.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, from what we can gather from correspondence and diaries, contemporaries were sensitive to the danger of mock petitions. If we have a look at what contemporary authors had to say about petitioning, we see that the common element in these comments was the fact that petitioning was an enterprise by citizens, not that it was a propaganda tool in the hands of governments.¹⁰⁸ One pamphleteer summarised petitioning simply as "the undertakings of citizens".¹⁰⁹

This is not to say that the novel use of printed petitions was widely supported. On the contrary, petitioning led to what David Zaret has dubbed the "paradox of innovation".¹¹⁰ The innovative aspects of petitioning,

¹⁰⁵ Gemeentearchief Rotterdam (GAR), 1.01, 791, and GAR, 1.01, 28.

¹⁰⁶ M. Reinders, *Gedrukte Chaos. Populisme en moord in het Rampjaar 1672* (Amsterdam, 2010).

¹⁰⁷ On the contrary, the two diaries that we have for this particular period both mention and discuss the original version and they do not speak about the altered versions. See Gebhard, "Een dagboek uit het rampjaar 1672," in *BMHG* 8, no. 1 (1885), 45–116 and "Jornaal van Jan van Schriek over de ongelegentheden te Rotterdam 1672" in *Nationaal Archief* (NA), 3.01.18 115, 1672.

¹⁰⁸ Schimmel, *Burgerrecht*, 76.

¹⁰⁹ *Hydra of Monster-Dier* (1672), Knuttel 10601, 20.

¹¹⁰ Zaret, *Origins*, 254–260.

claimed Zaret, were not defended openly. Instead, commentators ignored the implications of their own conduct, stressed the importance of “old habits” and presented their own behaviour, even when it was innovative, as part of tradition.

Presenting Petitions

Most petitions dealt with typical urban problems such as managing public spaces, infrastructure, economic life, social problems such as family abuse, and divorce cases.¹¹¹ During times of political crisis, however, the demands in petitions quickly became political. Most characteristically, citizens would demand that their privileges be upheld. Ultimately, they could even suggest replacing several regents.¹¹²

A petition from a group of people usually had more chance of success than a petition by an individual. A lawyer was often involved in drawing up the petition, to reduce the chances of approaching magistrates incorrectly. Besides using the right jargon, petitions were presented to government by the “most respectable citizens”, who often wore their finest clothes in order to be taken seriously. Petitioners identified themselves as *supplianten* to show their humbleness towards government.¹¹³ When the petition concerned matters of governance, everything was done to deny that the lower parts of society had anything to do with the undertaking, an indication of the widespread and deeply anchored inequality of early modern politics. A petition signed by a handful of respectable citizens would be more influential than one signed by hundreds of non-citizens. If approached properly, regents took petitions very seriously. Most significantly, there was a standard procedure for regents concerning petitions. The request was first handed over to government, after which the demands were investigated for validity and reasonableness. The request was then tested in relation to the common good, and lastly, a verdict was formulated.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Van Nierop, “Private Interests,” 33; G. Dorren, *Eenheid en verscheidenheid*; Zaret, *Origins*, 216; Knights, *Representation*, 109–149; P. Knevel, *Het Haags Bureau*, 88.

¹¹² Van der Bijl, *Idee en Interest*, 154.

¹¹³ Fockema, *De Nederlandse Staat*, 101. Cf. *Request voor Simon Claessen Cum Sociis* (1683), Knuttel 10983.

¹¹⁴ Knights, *Representation*, 110; A. Wood, *Riot*, 119; Van der Bijl, *Idee en Interest*, 156; *De Briefwisseling van Constantijn Huygens (1608–1687) uitgegeven door J.A. Worp, Vol 6. 1663–1687* (’s-Gravenhage, 1917), 306; Fockema, *De Nederlandse Staat*, 102; Dorren, *Eenheid*, 89; Knevel, *Burgers in het geweer*, 338, 347–348.

For politicians, petitions had another function: they served as useful tools for everyday politics. Despite complaints about the tedious work of dealing with petitioners, regents preferred reading a piece of paper to being pelted with stones, which meant that magistrates responded to grievances to keep the people they governed obedient.¹¹⁵ Moreover, governments used petitions to construct laws. Legal bodies would at times even wait for a petition before drafting a new legal text.¹¹⁶ This connection between petitions and law making was openly acknowledged by contemporaries. According to the individual who collected petitions for the city council in Rotterdam in 1672, many petitions were missing from this archive because they had been used to formulate local statutes.¹¹⁷ And as David Zaret has shown, a consequence of the widespread use of printed petitions was that reference was made to earlier unmet demands and grievances from former petitions, which supported the idea that politics was made up of a constant dialogue.¹¹⁸ This use is reflected in pamphlets as well. In addition to referring to unmet demands in their own towns, pamphleteers soon began pointing out what had been demanded in other cities and provinces. Pamphleteer Johan Gribbius, for example, summed up the petitions that had been filed in 1672 in the cities of Delft, Gouda, Tholen, Zierikzee, Middelburg, Vlissingen, Veere, Goes, Leiden, Haarlem and Amsterdam (in reality there were even more cities where petitions had appeared that year). In doing so, Gribbius, and many other pamphleteers, popularised the idea that citizenship involved a political agency that went beyond the locality. As a result, many of the petitioners knew what people in other cities were up to and what had been demanded, which supported not only the development of the idea of a public opinion in the Dutch Republic but also the development of the citizenry as a single group in the political nation.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Knevel, *Het Haagse Bureau*, 116; Van Nierop, "Private Interests," 33; C.R. Friedrichs, *Urban Politics in Early Modern Europe* (London/New York, 2000).

¹¹⁶ A. van Loo, *Poincten van Redres en Reformatie* (1672), Knuttel 10587. A petition by a group of butter carriers in Haarlem was literally made into the new statute for their trade, issued on 22 June 1700. Dorren, "De eerzamen," 75. Cf. Van Nierop, "Private Interests," 36; M. Prak, "Corporate Politics in the Low Countries: Guilds as Institutions, 14th to 18th centuries," *Craft Guilds in the Early Modern Low Countries. Work Power and Representation*, ed. M. Prak, C. Lis, J. Lucassen and H. Soly (Aldershot, 2006), 104.

¹¹⁷ GAR, 1.01, 677.

¹¹⁸ Zaret, *Origins*, 52, 216.

¹¹⁹ J. Gribbius, *D'Ontroerde Leeuw* (1672), Knuttel 10526, 40. Cf. M. Knights, "Parliament, Print and Corruption in Later Stuart Britain," in *The Print Culture of Parliament 1600–1800*, ed. J. Peacey (Edinburgh, 2007), 60–61.

1672: An Early Modern Laboratory

When groups of regents debated the future appointment of the prince of Orange as leader of the army and the fleet in January 1672, none of them could predict that several months later their appeals to a citizen audience would produce a politically participating public that was blessed with the agency of judgement. And why should they have? There had been many debates before, even on such inflammatory issues as the position of the prince of Orange in Dutch politics. Never had these debates led, however, to a simultaneous civic movement in several different cities, let alone multiple provinces. Never before had the citizenry described itself as a single group in opposition to those who ruled the Dutch Republic. Why did this happen in 1672? For the answer we have to be sensitive to the fact that none of what happened was planned or inevitable. Without the successful French invasion and the simultaneous war declarations by France, England, Munster and Cologne, Dutch regents would not have felt obliged to stress that citizens were invaluable to the Republic. Several different governments in the Republic (local and provincial) needed their citizens to pay their taxes as quickly as possible, and they needed them to help with the defence of the cities and borders. To meet these needs, they appealed to a citizen audience through pamphlets.¹²⁰ In doing so, they referred to citizenship as the foundation of Dutch government. Citizens were drafted and sent to the front in the eastern provinces. Consequently, Dutch citizens were given considerable ammunition in their plea for political agency. It was argued that citizens and governments were bound by a contract. As long as both parties upheld their part of the contract, governments were allowed to levy taxes and rule, while citizens were allowed to enjoy their privileges. For this to remain a workable reality, however, both parties needed to fulfil their duties. Governments were obliged to protect the city, province and Republic and provide good governance, while citizens were to obey government and, as was explicitly added, to pay taxes and help in the defence of the state.¹²¹ When Dutch governors no longer held up their end of the deal, and the foreign invasion threatened the very core of the Dutch Republic, the floodgates opened. Hundreds of thousands of pamphlets came out.

¹²⁰ *Consideration over den tegenwoordigen toestant van het vereenigde Nederland* (1672), Knuttel 10008; *Eenvoudig Burgerpraatje* (1672), Knuttel 10014).

¹²¹ *Het rechte fondament van het nieuwe herstellde oudt hollands regt* (1672), Knuttel 10309.

In these pamphlets we find a stew of opinions and arguments, of comments and campaigns, of demands and promises. The Year of Disaster can be regarded as an early modern laboratory of political action and ideas that was made possible by this unique combination of events. Some of it was horrifying. On 20 August 1672, Johan and Cornelis de Witt were ripped apart until there was nothing left but pieces of skin and bones. These assassinations triggered riots and violent attacks on regents throughout the Republic. One city after another was politically purged: hundreds of regents were forced to step down from office. When the dust cleared after October, the Dutch Republic was a changed land.

From this episode, it appeared that debating politics by publishing a pamphlet to seek consent for policy, to propagate policy or to object to policy was nothing out of the ordinary in early modern Dutch political life.¹²² Or, as one of the many anonymous pamphleteers wrote during the hot summer of 1672: “The entire Dutch universe seems to vent its spleen, and, with its mouth still full, vomits one poison-pen letter after another”.¹²³

¹²² J. Steengracht, *Nootwendige en Zedige Verantwoordingh* (1672), Knuttel 10581a, 4.

¹²³ *Beklagh over Hollants Verkeerde wegen* (1672), Knuttel 10451, 3.

CHAPTER ONE

PRINT AND POLITICS IN EARLY MODERN HISTORY

Walking through a town of some size in the Dutch Republic during the seventeenth century would inevitably mean running into a print shop, a bookstore, and when one of the many weekly or monthly markets was taking place, it meant seeing – and hearing – peddlers selling all sorts of published news.¹ A stop at an inn, a visit to one of the many houses of the city militia or a trip on a barge meant hearing news read from popular printed publications that were available everywhere. More often, it also meant debating news with fellow travellers. In the Dutch Republic, print was everywhere.

The introduction of printed publications into the daily life of early modern man has received scholarly attention ever since the 1950s, when the history of the book became a separate field of research within the historical profession.² The real breakthrough had to wait until Elisabeth Eisenstein published *The printing press as an agent of change* in 1979, where she advocated the position that the Renaissance, Reformation and rise of modern science had been possible only as a consequence of the advent of print.³ This view has since been altered on several points.⁴ Most notably, the enduring importance of the spread of oral and manuscript information has been reclaimed. Print did not replace oral culture. On the contrary, oral culture has remained strong, arguably, until today. We could say that all circuits, print, oral and manuscript, became interwoven.⁵

¹ R. Harms, "Handel in Letteren"; J. Salman, "Het nieuws op straat".

² J. Rose, "The History of Books: Revised and Enlarged," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 359 (1998): 89; P.G. Hoftijzer, 'Rijk van Pallas', rede uitgesproken bij de aanvaarding van het ambt van bijzonder hoogleraar in de geschiedenis van het boek vanwege de Dr. P.A. Tiele-stichting aan de Universiteit Leiden op 5 september 2003 (Leiden, 2003), 6.

³ E.L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2000 [first published 1983]).

⁴ A. Johns, *The Nature of the Book. Print Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago/London, 1998); Hoftijzer, *Rijk van Pallas*, 6.

⁵ Briggs and Burke, *A Social History of the Media*, 13–90; R.W. Scribner, "Oral Culture and the Diffusion of Reformation Ideas," in *Popular Culture and Popular Movements in Reformation Germany*, ed. R.W. Scribner (London, 2003); Harris, "Introduction," 9–10; P. Dijstelberge, "Gemengde berichten. Nieuws als literatuur in de zeventiende eeuw," *Literatuur* 17, no. 5 (2000); N. Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*.

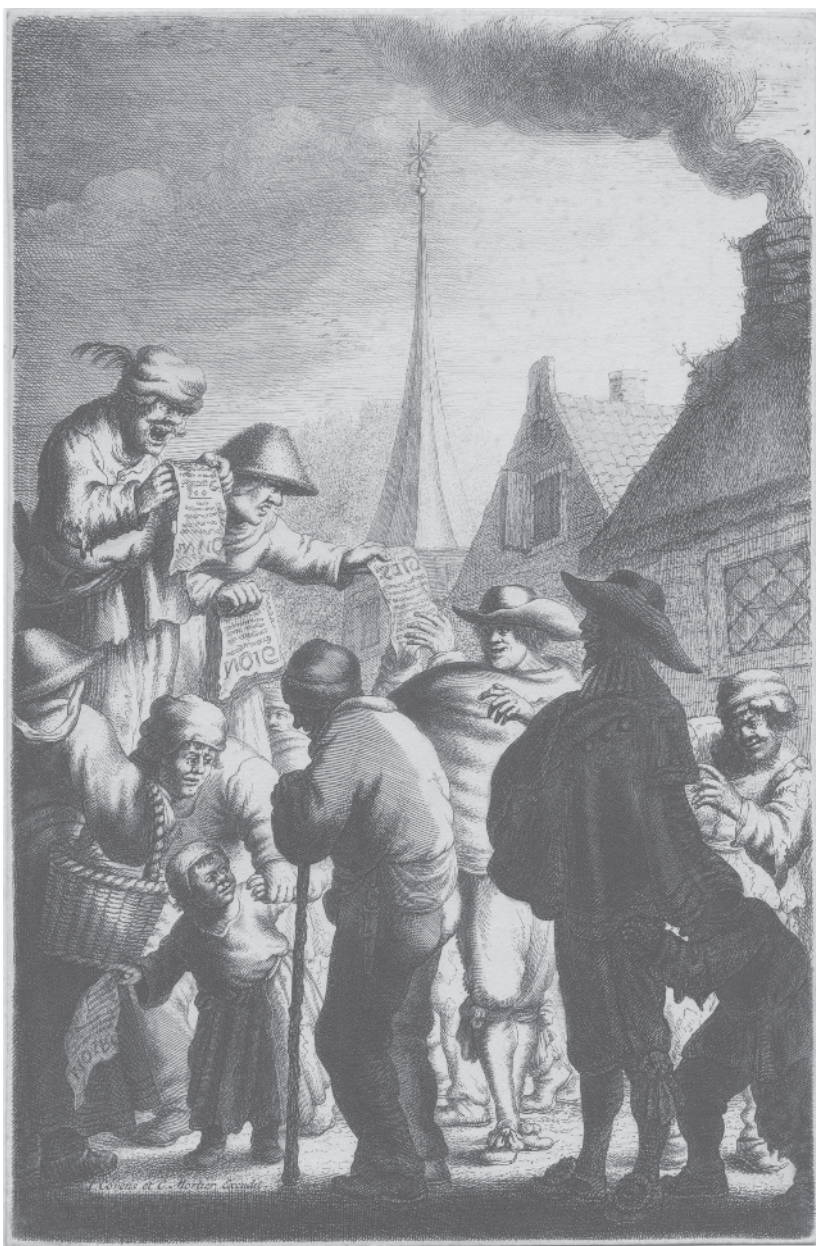


Fig 2. The pamphlet salesman. J. van Vliet, *De pamflettenverkoper of liedjeszanger*, Atlas van Stolk 2110.

In 1671, for example, the local government in the city of Deventer published an Act against riotous pamphlets. The ban specifically mentioned the “libels and poems” that had been spread among the inhabitants, but the fact that these stories had been “publicly sung in the streets” also indicated that printed publications could be spread orally.⁶

In general, however, historians have accepted the dominant position of print in early modern life. In several ways, print did fundamentally change the political culture of early modern history, especially in the field of popular politics. Joad Raymond has argued that “the ability to read print was more common than the ability to read manuscript and the ability to write, and it was this mode of literacy that provided the foundation for pamphlet culture”.⁷ The acknowledgement of the importance of print has had great influence on the historiography of political unrest and revolutions. Whereas political revolutions traditionally have been explained by pointing to economic causes, now the press is deemed to have been involved.⁸ This relation between print and politics is the subject of this chapter.

Dutch Printing in a European, National and Local Context

During the seventeenth century, the Dutch publishing industry was arguably the largest and most sophisticated in Europe. Graham Gibbs has called it “the intellectual entrepôt of Europe”.⁹ Paul Hoftijzer has claimed that “by the middle of the seventeenth century the United Provinces had become the undisputed centre of the European book trade, producing a larger assortment of books and other printed material than anywhere else in Europe”.¹⁰ Dutch print culture has been described as “the experimental garden” of Europe.¹¹ Some bookshops even functioned as tourist

Eight Essays (Stanford, 1975), 218; Burke, *Popular Culture*, 65; Martin, *The History and Power of Writing*, 283; Martin, “Publishing Conditions and Strategies,” 43–67.

⁶ Weekhout, *Boekencensuur*, 262–263.

⁷ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 91.

⁸ Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence*, 341.

⁹ G.C. Gibbs, “The Role of the Dutch Republic as the Intellectual Entrepôt of Europe in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” *BMGN* 86, no. 3 (1971). Cf. Frijhoff and Spies, 1650, 21.

¹⁰ P.G. Hoftijzer, “Between Mercury and Minerva: Dutch Printing Offices and Bookshops as Intermediaries in Seventeenth-century Scholarly Communication,” in *Commercium litterarium, 1600–1750: Forms of Communication in the Republic of Letters: Lectures Held at the Colloquia Paris 1992 and Nijmegen 1993*, ed. H. Bots and F. Waquet (Amsterdam/Maarssen, 1994), 120.

¹¹ Frijhoff and Spies, 1650, 177.

attractions. Prince Cosimo de Medici, who toured the Dutch Republic in 1668, visited several famous publishing companies in Amsterdam.¹²

Dutch publishing was successful internationally in two ways. Firstly, the Dutch monopolised the trade in publications.¹³ Secondly, the Dutch printed a large part of the total European book production.¹⁴ By comparison to other states such as England and France, the Dutch Republic apparently enjoyed favourable circumstances that promoted the publishing industry. For one, censorship proved ineffective, and the Dutch Republic became a mass producer of illegal pamphlets and forbidden books. Many exiles and freethinkers chose to move to the United Provinces.¹⁵

Censorship

Writers, printers, sellers and even readers of pamphlets knew very well that they operated on the verge of illegality. Pamphleteering meant taking risks: the risk of being unmasked as a pamphleteer, the risk of being caught and subsequently, the risk of being thrown in jail, tortured or even killed. In October 1672, a long-, brown-haired woman called Jannetje la Roche, from Utrecht, was imprisoned for repeatedly “travelling with letters of correspondence from Gorcum to Utrecht and back”.¹⁶ Also in 1672, a man was beheaded in Groningen for smuggling letters.¹⁷ Punishments for

¹² Hoftijzer, “Between Mercury and Minerva,” 127.

¹³ P. Arblaster, “Londen, Antwerp and Amsterdam: Journalistic Relations in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century,” in *The Bookshop of the World. The Role of the Low Countries in the Book-trade 1473–1941*, ed. A. Duke et al. (‘t Gooi-Houten, 2001); P.G. Hoftijzer, *Engelse boekverkoopers bij de beurs. De geschiedenis van de Amsterdamse boekhandels Bruyning en Swart* (Amsterdam/Maarssen, 1987), 5–10.

¹⁴ H. Vervliet, “De typografie gedurende de 15^{de} tot 18de eeuw,” in *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* (Haarlem, 1980), 204; J.I. Israel, “The Publishing of Forbidden Philosophical Works in the Dutch Republic (1666–1710) and their European Distribution,” in *The Bookshop of the World*, ed. A. Duke et al. (‘t Gooi-Houten, 2001); L. Hellinga, “The Bookshop of the World: Books and Their Makers as Agents of Cultural Exchange,” in *The Bookshop of the World*, ed. A. Duke et al., 12.

¹⁵ Vervliet, “De typografie,” 204; Israel, “The Publishing of Forbidden Philosophical Works in the Dutch Republic”; Hoftijzer, *Engelse boekverkoopers*, 5–10.

¹⁶ N. Japikse, *Correspondentie van Willem III en van Hans Willem Bentinck, eersten graaf van Portland, uitgegeven door N. Japikse. Tweede gedeelte: uit Engelsche en Nederlandsche archieven en bibliotheken. Deel 1* (’s-Gravenhage, 1932), 122. Cf. Harline, *Pamphlets*, 159; Van Gelder, *Getemperde vrijheid*, 189; G.W. Kernkamp, *De Regeering van Amsterdam. Soo in ‘t civiel als crimineel en militaire (1653–1672). Ontworpen door Hans Bontemantel*, vol. 1 (’s Gravenhage, 1897), 21–22; Sawyer, *Printed Poison*, 52; A. Bellany, “The embarrassment of libels: Perceptions and Representations of Verse Libelling in Early Stuart England,” in *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England*, ed. P. Lake and S. Pincus (Manchester, 2007), 146.

¹⁷ *Missive uyt Groningen*, Van Alphen 379.

pamphleteering usually included shame. In 1688, Pierre Boyer, a French preacher who had written the pamphlet *La Couronne Usurpée*, had to rip up his own pamphlet in court.¹⁸ Even reading a pamphlet was not without risks. A woman in Noordwijk was fined 30 guilders for reading a pamphlet aloud for an audience in 1619, while the members of the audience were fined 25 guilders and the owner of the house where the reading session had taken place was fined 200 guilders.¹⁹

Ever since the very beginning of the Republic, governments had tried to control pamphleteering through laws restricting the writing, printing, distributing and reading of pamphlets. Due to the fragmented, particularistic political structure, however, it was practically impossible to carry out this censorship in practice.²⁰ Bans on books, pamphlets and publishing political news in general were issued by the States General, provincial states, cities and even by William of Orange, who issued a ban on "annoying little books, news reports, songs, verses and the like" in 1581.²¹ In 1618, the States General issued a preventive ban on all licentious publications. From then on, for books to be published, the States General's permission was required. Printers were forbidden to print anything anonymously or without year of publication. One copy of every publication had to be sent to a federal commission.²² The penalties for unlicensed publishing ranged from fines to banishment from the Republic and physical punishment. These censorship measures were relatively universal in Europe, and the Dutch Republic was formally no exception.²³

However, censorship such as the federal ban of 1618 was useless unless followed up by the provinces, where the federal laws had to be put into practice.²⁴ This hardly ever happened, which is, in a nutshell, the history of censorship in the Dutch Republic: the intention was there, but the execution was generally lacking.²⁵ Dutch exceptionalism lay thus in the

¹⁸ Weekhout, *Boekencensuur*, 67–69. Cf. Zwicker, "The Constitution of Opinion and the Pacification of Reading," 302.

¹⁹ Van Gelder, *Getemperde vrijheid*, 156. Cf. Hoftijzer, *Engelse boekverkopers*, 38; Schimmel, *Burgerrecht*, 64.

²⁰ J. van Eijnatten, "Van godsdienstvrijheid naar mensenrecht. Meningsvorming over censuur en persvrijheid in de Republiek 1579–1795," *BMGN* 118, no. 1 (2003): 2.

²¹ Groenveld, "The Mecca of Authors?," 68; Weekhout, *Boekencensuur*, 29.

²² Van Gelder, *Getemperde vrijheid*, 154.

²³ Cf. Gibbs, "Press and Public Opinion: Prospective"; Schwoerer, "Liberty of the Press".

²⁴ Van Gelder, *Getemperde vrijheid*, 155–161; Huussen, "Censuur," 14–15; Gibbs, "Press and Public Opinion: Prospective," 13; Weekhout, *Boekencensuur*, 55, 62; Harline, *Pamphlets*, 120.

²⁵ Van Gelder, *Getemperde vrijheid*, 170.

practice of censorship, not in the principle. This practice of censorship in the Dutch Republic supported pamphleteering in five ways.

Firstly, the Republic lacked an institution with enough power to execute the federal laws. When printers, publishers and writers of seditious pamphlets were prosecuted or wanted in one city or province, they could quite easily flee to another city or province, where they were safe from prosecution. Pamphleteers could use the differences in bans to publish and distribute their products in the Republic.²⁶

Secondly, the different administrative units lacked the means to enforce the censorship that they did establish. When a writer, printer or publisher was banned from a city, province or even from the Republic, it was far from sure that this punishment would be put into effect. Moreover, magistrates sometimes felt disinclined to cooperate with provincial states or States General. In Amsterdam, for example, local government refused to search the house of Hendrik Boom, a well-known printer of illegal publications, even after repeated warnings from the Court of Holland in 1669. When eventually the Court did decide to search Boom's home, Alderman Hans Bontemantel rushed to Boom's print shop and warned him.²⁷

Thirdly, censorship was selective. In general, pamphlets were considered a problem only if they criticized someone in a network that could produce censorship, i.e. someone in government. As a consequence, during the years 1650 to 1672 Orangist pamphlets ran a much greater risk of being banned than pamphlets that supported the True Freedom. In 1654 the periodical *Wekelycke Mercurius* was banned for being "too friendly to the prince of Orange".²⁸ In and after 1672, however, not one Orangist pamphlet was banned, while the writers, printers and sellers of several pamphlets that supported the ideas of the True Freedom were prosecuted and their pamphlets banned.²⁹

Fourthly, the lack of successful censorship inspired other ways of reaction and retribution. Dutch politicians quickly found out that censorship was not the surest way to win an argument, so they reacted in print. For one pamphleteer this was a reason to claim that the only way to save one's honour in the Republic was "to publish a printed rebuttal and spread it

²⁶ Verkruysse, "De verspreiding van populaire literatuur." Cf. Schwoerer, "Liberty of the Press," 210.

²⁷ Kernkamp, *De Regeering van Amsterdam*; Gelder, *Getemperde vrijheid*, 161.

²⁸ Van Gelder, *Getemperde vrijheid*, 189. Cf. Frijhoff and Spies, 1650, 266; W.P.C. Knuttel, *Verboden Boeken in de republiek der vereenigde Nederlanden* ('s Gravenhage, 1914).

²⁹ Weekhout, *Boekencensuur*, 71; Van Gelder, *Getemperde vrijheid*, 166; Eijnatten, "Van godsdienstvrijheid naar mensenrecht," 7.

among a public".³⁰ Such tit-for-tat responses did not always produce the desired effect. When Bartholomeus van der Velde, a mayor in Rotterdam, was attacked during the Costerman revolt in the late seventeenth century, he asked the famous pamphleteer Erikus Walten to write a refutation on his behalf. When the refutation appeared too radical, however, Van der Velde banned the publication that he had himself commissioned.³¹

Lastly, the decentralised political structure and lack of successful censorship guaranteed that political information was easily obtained. Provincial clerks would, for example, hire young assistants to copy the resolutions that they were supposed to copy themselves. "These assistants were often young and unreliable", claimed historian Paul Knevel.³² Consequently, classified information was hardly ever kept secret. Political decisions were at times published in pamphlets before they had been formally adopted.³³

The lack of successful censorship and the ways in which this stimulated pamphleteering leaves the impression that the Dutch Republic was a "palladium of press liberty", as Gibbs has put it.³⁴ However, one cannot ascribe to the Dutch an innate love for freedom of speech or freedom of the press. The relative freedom of the press was a consequence of the political structure and the lack of governmental means rather than a choice or a conviction.³⁵

Competition, Piracy and Differentiation

In addition to the lack of successful censorship, other characteristics also promoted a lively Dutch publishing industry. Geographically, the Republic lay at a central position between the large European countries, Moscow, the Levant and America. Furthermore, the Dutch had a high literacy rate,

³⁰ Steengracht, *Nootwendige en Zedige Verantwoordingh*, Knuttel 10581a, 4.

³¹ Weekhout, *Boekencensuur*, 172.

³² Knevel, *Het Haagse Bureau*, 121–122. Cf. Franken, *Coenraad van Beuningen*, 25–32.

³³ Harline, *Pamphlets*. Cf. Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, 268.

³⁴ Gibbs, "Press and Public Opinion: Prospective," 8. Cf. P. Arblaster, " 'Dat de boeken vrij sullen wesen': Private Profit, Public Utility and Secrets of State in the Seventeenth-Century Habsburg Netherlands," in *News and Politics in Early Modern Europe (1500–1800)*, ed. J.W. Koopmans (Leuven/Paris/Dudley, 2005).

³⁵ Cf. Van Gelder, *Getemperde vrijheid*, 151; Hoeven, "Verzamelaars en pamfletten," 10; Weekhout, *Boekencensuur*, 55, 111; Van Eijnatten, "Van godsdienstvrijheid naar mensenrecht," 5; Hayden, "The uses of political pamphlets," 151.

and the paper-and-letter production was sophisticated.³⁶ Moreover, not only could foreign producers and writers relatively easily publish a forbidden book in the Dutch Republic, but the result was also usually superior in quality to that produced by printers at home. All these factors contributed to three important tendencies in Dutch publishing: competition, piracy and differentiation.

Competition was fierce among printers, booksellers and writers, who sold their talents to the highest bidder.³⁷ In Amsterdam more than a thousand printers and booksellers worked and competed during the seventeenth century.³⁸ When news from another province came to Holland, several editions of the same story usually appeared, spread by different printers who scrambled to get their version on the market first. The same news story about the siege of Groningen in the summer of 1672, for example, appeared from the presses of Jan Tomasz and Dirck Theunisz, who both lived and worked in Amsterdam.³⁹ In total 208 printers were active in the entire Dutch Republic in 1672. Holland was by far the most important province in Dutch publishing. In general, during the seventeenth century, eighty per cent of all printers were located in this province.⁴⁰ For the 1600 pamphlets that were published in 1672, the province of origin is known for 526. Holland was responsible for 404. Zeeland followed with 51, Utrecht 31, Friesland 15, Overijssel 13, Groningen 10, and Gelderland 2. Publications from Holland stood out not only on account of their quantity. According to contemporaries, the status and quality of publications from a city such as Deventer were inferior to those of publications from Holland.⁴¹ The practical implication of this difference was that in the few cases where a pamphlet was published in two provinces, the second edition was usually published in Holland.

³⁶ Hoftijzer, *Engelse boekverkopers*, 1–2; J.G. van Dillen, *Van Rijkdom en regenten. Handboek tot de economische en sociale geschiedenis van Nederland tijdens de Republiek* ('s Gravenhage, 1970), 406–407.

³⁷ Hoftijzer, "Between Mercury and Minerva," 125.

³⁸ P.G. Hoftijzer, *De Zeis in andermans koren. Over nadruk in Nederland tijdens de Republiek, Rede uitgesproken bij de aanvaarding van het ambt van bijzonder hoogleraar in de geschiedenis van de uitgeverij en boekhandel vanwege de Dr P.A. Tiele-Stichting aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam op 17 september 1993* (Amsterdam, 1993), 6.

³⁹ Both versions were catalogued under the same number in the Tiele pamphlet collection. *Extract uyt Groningen, van de doot van den Bisschop van Munster* (1672), Tiele 6008.

⁴⁰ Weekhout, *Boekencensuur*, 43; S. Groenveld, "The Mecca of Authors? States Assemblies and Censorship in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic," *Britain and The Netherlands* 9 (1988): 65–66.

⁴¹ Weekhout, *Boekencensuur*, 49.

Much in the same way as Holland monopolised printing in the Dutch Republic, Amsterdam monopolised printing in the province of Holland.⁴² According to Paul Hoftijzer, "Amsterdam swarmed with booksellers during the second half of the seventeenth century".⁴³ Out of a national output of 100,000 titles in the seventeenth century, 60,000 were published in Amsterdam. As has been noted above, Amsterdam had a thousand active printers during the seventeenth century. Leiden, the city with the oldest and most productive university, came in second, with 250 printers. Rotterdam followed with 200. The Hague was fourth with 150.

In 1672, 86 printers from Amsterdam published pamphlets, followed by The Hague (13), Middelburg (11) and Rotterdam (10). Importantly, printers and booksellers could also be found in nearly all other cities in the Republic, even in little border towns such as Nijmegen.⁴⁴

Of the 526 pamphlets published in 1672 whose origins are known, Amsterdam produced 211, followed by The Hague (96), Middelburg (49), Rotterdam (31) and Utrecht (30). Leiden, the scholarly capital of the Dutch Republic, came in in only fourteenth place (out of 38 cities in total) with 5 known publications in that year. Just as Holland held a preeminent position within Dutch printing, publications from Amsterdam appeared to have had something special that other publications lacked, or as one of the many pamphleteers wrote, "if it is not from Amsterdam, I think little of it".⁴⁵

Still, the most productive printer came from The Hague: Jacobus Scheltus, the preferred printer of the States General and the States of Holland, published 74 pamphlets in 1672. He was followed by the Amsterdammer Albert van Panhuysen (26) and Johan Misson from Middelburg (17). The pseudonym Claes-Kijck Uyt can be found 16 times, used, remarkably enough, by different printers to cover their identity.

All this competition within the Dutch publishing industry led to widespread piracy or, as a pamphleteer called it, "that harmful plague of authors

⁴² Groenveld, "The Mecca of Authors?," 65.

⁴³ Hoftijzer, *Engelse boekverkopers*, 35.

⁴⁴ Hoftijzer, *Rijk van Pallas*, 4; M. Evers, H. Mourik, E. Van Vercateren and D. van Wingerden, "Lijst van Rotterdamse boekverkopers tot 1800 gebaseerd op de aantekeningen van H.C. Hazewinkel," in *Rotterdam Bibliopolis. Een rondgang langs boekverkopers uit de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw*, ed. H. Bots, O.S. Lankhorst and C. Zevenbergen (Rotterdam, 1997), 485; Frijhoff and Spies, *1650*, 268; Hoftijzer, "Between Mercury and Minerva," 121; Verkruijse, "De verspreiding van populaire literatuur".

⁴⁵ *Huysmans-Praetje* (1672), Knuttel 10282 ed., 9.

and printers”.⁴⁶ The most obvious motive for publishing a pirated edition was financial benefit. According to the Amsterdam printer Jacobus van Egmont, piracy was necessary because without it, he “could not earn enough to survive”.⁴⁷ Pamphleteers had another argument for putting a pirated edition on the market. Books and other printed media were said to be too expensive, and the pirate claimed that by publishing a cheaper pirated edition, he was doing society a favour.⁴⁸ This argument perhaps had some merit. The first two editions of Newton’s *Principia Mathematica* were too expensive and rare for the continent. Not until pirated prints appeared did Newton’s ideas become widely spread over Europe.⁴⁹ A typical fine for a pirated edition was 300 guilders.⁵⁰ When we consider the enormous numbers of pirated editions, it seems unlikely that these fines scared many printers. Complaints about piracy were often heard and well known.

Another characteristic of the Dutch publishing trade, in addition to competition and piracy, was the early specialisation brought about by the abundance of printers and booksellers.⁵¹ During the second half of the seventeenth century, the Dutch market for print was highly differentiated, even to the extent that some printers could not keep up. One printer complained that “first my pamphlets are too Latin, now they are too poetic”, showing that he could not find a successful niche.⁵² Logically, specialisation and differentiation were mostly characteristic of the larger towns. Some towns could even be labelled specialised as a whole.⁵³ A reader in search of a publication had a variety of choices in the larger cities of the Dutch Republic. Most niche markets had their own publishers and their own booksellers. Publications about different religions, from Socinianism to English Quakerism, were to be found at different addresses.⁵⁴ The same

⁴⁶ Hoftijzer, *De Zeis in andermans koren*, 2–3.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 7.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 6.

⁵⁰ O.S. Lankhorst, *Reinier Leers, uitgever en boekverkoper te Rotterdam (1654–1714). Een Europees ‘libraire’ en zijn fonds* (Amsterdam/Maarssen, 1983), 71.

⁵¹ P. Dijkstra, “Ik wil dat er gelezen wordt. Boekgeschiedenis: analytische bibliografie, boekarcheologie,” in *Het lange leven van het pamflet*, ed. J. de Kruif et al. (Hilversum, 2006), 49. Cf. Hoftijzer, *Engelse boekverkopers*, 37; A. van Mameren, “De gazophylace. Het drukkersconflict tussen Pieter van Waesberghe en Johannes Naeranus,” in *Rotterdam Bibliopolis*, ed. H. Bots et al. (Rotterdam, 1997), 42.

⁵² *Oprechte Vermeerderde Brillen*, Knuttel 10488, 2.

⁵³ Frijhoff and Spies, 1650, 271–273; Hoftijzer, *Engelse boekverkopers*, 19.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 37.

principle applied in the fields of physics, leisure and, most importantly, politics.⁵⁵

Producers

Every publication starts with a thought. It would be wrong to assume, however, that this thought was always the author's. Often, a bookseller functioned as the producer of a publication. The bookseller would have an idea for which he sought a writer and a printer separately. Bookseller Thomas van Hoorn, for example, employed printer Philips De Crouy to publish a work that had been written by Johan de Bye. This author was never obliged to meet (or know) the person who printed his work.⁵⁶ At other times, a printer would function as producer. One of the most successful pamphlets of the 1670s, *d'Ontroerde Leeuw*, was a project by printer Steven Swart, who found an author in Johan Gribbius. *D'Ontroerde Leeuw* provided a summary of recent events in under a hundred pages. Swart produced five versions of this successful formula between 1672 and 1675.⁵⁷ And an author could also be the producer. When the Amsterdammer Volckert van de Velde wrote a pamphlet to slander his ex-wife, who had betrayed him with another man, he found a printer who put "printed for the author" on the title page.⁵⁸ Lastly, an individual or group of people who needed a publication for a (political) goal could also be its producer.

Publishing Motivation

Producers, writers, printers and sellers of pamphlets engaged in pamphleteering for two reasons in particular: ideology and commerce.⁵⁹ It was claimed that Abraham de Wicquefort had written a history of the Dutch Republic "for honour and profit", showing that the distinction between these motivations was often flexible.⁶⁰ Pamphleteers could write for

⁵⁵ Ibid., 29; M. Keblusek, "The Exile Experience: Royalist and Anglican Book Culture in the Low Countries (1640–1660)," in *The Bookshop of the World*, ed. A. Duke et al., 152.

⁵⁶ J. de Bye, *In 't bedrukte Jaar 1672* (1672), Petit 3850. Cf. *Verhael van d'Erbarmelijske Staet der Protestantsche Kercken in Vrankryk* (1672), Knuttel 9940.

⁵⁷ J. Gribbius, *D'Ontroerde Leeuw* (1672), Knuttel 10526.

⁵⁸ *Coppe van een Brief door Volckert van de Velde geschreven aen syn Huys-vrouw Anna Stoffelse* (1672), Petit 3989. Cf. *France Brandewyns-deun* (1672), Knuttel 10000.

⁵⁹ Dijstelberge, "Ik wil dat er gelezen wordt," 48.

⁶⁰ *t'Samenspraak Van den Wonderlijken Droom van Willem de Lange* (1672), Knuttel 10491, 3.

money and remain loyal to a patron or committed to a cause, while people who were ideologically committed could make a decent living from their beliefs.⁶¹

In the Dutch Republic, publishing was serious business. The men behind the pamphlet *Den Bedrieger Bedrogen* from 1757, for example, earned “thousands of guilders”.⁶² The success of a publication was measured not only by the satisfaction of a patron or damage done to a (political) adversary, but also by the financial returns from the product. People who invested in a publication wanted to earn back their money. Printers, who invested in printing equipment, and booksellers, who often invested in a shop, had commercial motivations for engaging in publishing. Hoftijzer has argued that most Dutch printers were commercial entrepreneurs. They published what they could get their hands on, “sometimes even without knowing what they were printing”.⁶³ That the Amsterdam printer Jacob Lescaijle printed both pamphlets that attacked and pamphlets that supported the Amsterdam theatre group *Nil Volentibus Arduum*, a collective that was often caught up in heated polemical discussions, is evidence of commercial, rather than ideological, motivation.⁶⁴ Harline thinks that Dutch booksellers had a nose for commerce – he calls it a mania – especially as sellers of news stories.⁶⁵ Newssheets were indeed typically commercial productions. Many different stories were published on one or a few pages. These stories often contradicted each other, making it hard to label the motivation behind their production as ideological.⁶⁶

The position of the writer was more complicated than that of the men who had to earn back their investments. In the early modern period, a shift can be seen from a situation wherein authors were part of a patron's clientele and were paid, if at all, by protection, the promise of long-term commitment, minor offices or, occasionally, money, to a situation wherein

⁶¹ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 56; Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers*, 273–277.

⁶² P. Geyl, “De Witten-oorlog, een pennestrijd in 1757,” in *Pennestrijd over staat en historie. Opstellen over de Vaderlandse Geschiedenis aangevuld met Geyl's Levensverhaal (tot 1945)*, ed. P. Geyl, (Groningen, 1971), 131.

⁶³ Hoftijzer, “Between Mercury and Minerva,” 124; P.G.B. Thissen, “Frans van Hoogstraten (1632–1696),” in *Rotterdam Bibliopolis*, ed. H. Bots et al. (Rotterdam, 1997), 196. Cf. J. Zijlmans, *Vriendenkringen in de zeventiende eeuw. Verenigingsvormen van het informele culturele leven in Rotterdam* (Den Haag, 1999).

⁶⁴ B.P.M. Dongelmans, *Nil Volentibus Arduum: documenten en bronnen. Een uitgave van Balthazar Huydecopers aantekeningen uit de originele notulen van het genootschap* (Utrecht, 1982), 82, 389.

⁶⁵ Harline, *Pamphlets*, 78, 91.

⁶⁶ Cf. *Vier Brieven uyt 's Lants Vloot* (1672), Tiele 6048.

authors wrote for an anonymous public and expected to be paid for every single publication by a publisher who profited from their work.⁶⁷ This shift coincided with the advent of an anonymous public that had to be pleased in addition to – or instead of – the patron or the producer.⁶⁸ We can date this transition principally to the seventeenth century, when the market for popular political publications grew spectacularly in urban areas. When Johan de Witt published his *Deduction* in 1654, the French ambassador Pierre-Hector Chanut wrote that the other provinces had driven Holland to appeal to public opinion, so that now “the people are made the judges of their magistrates”.⁶⁹ This shift, which greatly accelerated in 1672, meant a new approach to writing.⁷⁰ The author who sought to please a patron hoped for compensation after publication, to which end he might, for example, add a dedication to his book. The author who sought to please an anonymous crowd knew that he was going to be paid before the publication was brought on the market or that he would be paid regardless of the opinion of one specific reader. Therefore it is not surprising that pamphlets were hardly ever dedicated to an individual.⁷¹ Paid writers were not all ruthless hacks, however; they exhibited significant variety. Jason Peacey found a group of authors who “worked on an ad hoc basis and for money, and ought to be considered as little more than hacks and hired-pens”. For these authors, writing was not a profession but a side-line.⁷² These pens could be hired whenever a politician needed a publication. At other times, these writers went their own way. However, there were also writers who served as full-time salaried authors in the service of politicians.⁷³ The tie that bound these writers together was their conviction that writing deserved payment. It can be argued that the existence of professional writers could partly explain the exceptionally high number of anonymous pamphlets, because a professional writer could not afford to be ideologically bound and might be obliged to attack and defend

⁶⁷ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 57; Sharpe and Zwicker, “Introduction. Refiguring Revolutions,” 8; Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture*, 216.

⁶⁸ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 94.

⁶⁹ Rowen, *John de Witt. Statesman of the ‘True Freedom’*, 47; Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 59. Cf. E.K. Grootes, “De literator,” in *Gestalten van de Gouden Eeuw. Een Hollands groepsportret*, ed. H.M. Beliën, A.Th. van Deursen and G.J. van Setten (Amsterdam, 1996), 349–354; Martin, “Publishing Conditions and Strategies,” 52, 375.

⁷⁰ J.R. Censer and J.D. Popkin, “Historians and the Press,” in *Press and Politics in Pre-revolutionary France*, ed. Censer and Popkin (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 1987), 20.

⁷¹ Harline, *Pamphlets*, 92–94.

⁷² Grootes, “De literator,” 349.

⁷³ Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers*, 273–274.

the same problem in different pamphlets.⁷⁴ One professional writer could be employed for several different pamphlet campaigns.

There were also printers, booksellers and authors who were ideologically motivated. Take, for example, the Amsterdam printer Willem van Beaumont, who was related to the family De Witt. Van Beaumont printed one of the few pamphlets that defended Johan and Cornelis de Witt after their murder. Van Beaumont was not afraid to put the name of his print shop, "Witte Pars", on the title page, making the origin of the pamphlet publicly known.⁷⁵ Another example is provided by the English Royalist printer and bookseller Samuel Browne, who lived and worked in The Hague and changed the phrase "members of parliament" into "animals" in an Amsterdam edition of a speech by Oliver Cromwell.⁷⁶

It has been argued that authors, in contrast to publishers and printers, were more often ideologically than commercially inclined. Harline has claimed that "most authors of pamphlets were devoted to a particular cause, and wrote primarily out of conviction, not hopes of profits".⁷⁷ Since we have learned, however, that authors who expected payment after publication of their work often sought patronage, and that authors who expected to be paid upfront wrote to please an unknown audience (their success was measured in terms of the market), we can safely assume that even ideologically motivated authors were forced to think commercially. Authors had to please a public, whether this public was made up of one powerful patron or a multitude of anonymous readers. The argument of the publication had to be sold.⁷⁸ This leads to an obvious but necessary assessment of the motivations for publishing in the early modern period: there are two extremes on the scale, which runs from rigid ideology to commercial pragmatism. Producers, printers and booksellers had beliefs but at the same time were under pressure to be financially successful. Producers might favour certain political strands but would think of pursuing a publication only when they knew that it would be commercially viable.⁷⁹ No matter how ideologically committed they were, producers of

⁷⁴ Dijkstra, "Ik wil dat er gelezen wordt," 48.

⁷⁵ F. Vryling, *Het onbevleete Wit* (1672), Knuttel 10230; Weekhout, *Boekencensuur*, 90.

⁷⁶ Keblusek, "The Exile Experience," 152.

⁷⁷ Harline, *Pamphlets*, 105.

⁷⁸ Cf. Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers*, 16. Cf. G.H. Janssen, "Dutch Clientelism and News Networks in Public and Private Spheres. The Case of Stadholder William Frederick (1613–1664)," in *News and Politics in Early Modern Europe (1500–1800)*, ed. J.W. Koopmans (Leuven/Paris/Dudley, 2005).

⁷⁹ Mameren, "De gazophylace"; Thissen, "Frans van Hoogstraten".

popular political publications did not want to go bankrupt in support of the cause.

Writers

It is hard to make generalisations about the authors of pamphlets. Of the 1605 pamphlets published in 1672, 996 were original productions; the other 609 were reprints of pamphlets previously issued. Of these 996 pamphlets, a little more than half (553) were published anonymously. Of the remaining 443 pamphlets, 121 were written under a pseudonym, hiding the author's identity from a large part of the audience while revealing it to a small group of insiders. We are left with 322 pamphlets written by a known author. These 322 pamphlets were written by 209 different authors, indicating that several authors wrote more than one pamphlet in 1672. Pamphleteering encompassed nearly all social, political, religious and economic positions within Dutch society. Some groups were, however, overrepresented, while other groups were only seen sporadically. Women were rarely to be found among pamphleteers. Only two women produced pamphlets during 1672: Annetje Dircx and Katarina Lescailje.⁸⁰

Since pamphleteering was in large part a political undertaking, it cannot surprise us that politicians wrote many pamphlets in many different forms. Governmental bodies produced the bulk of pamphlets with a known author in 1672. The seven writers with the greatest number of publications in 1672 were all writing for governmental bodies or individuals. The prince of Orange took the prize with 29 publications in 1672. Surprisingly, Johan de Witt, who was subjected to the most vicious pamphlet campaigns in 1672, published only 3 pamphlets himself. Moreover, Pieter de la Court and Johan Uytenhage de Mist, the men who are believed to have written the bulk of True Freedom propaganda during the 1660s, did not write a single pamphlet during the Year of Disaster.

Besides publishing vast amounts of political propaganda, regents also engaged in the market for popular publications for personal reasons. Ferdinandus Gruiwardt was a regent from Zeeland, but when he addressed his audience, he was speaking to his "fellow citizens". The content of his

⁸⁰ A. Dircx, *Wonderlijke Doot van Jan de Wit, en Ruwaert van Putten* (1672), Tiele 6116; K. Lescailje, *Op het Vertrek van den doorluchtighsten Vorst Zyn Hoogheit Wilhemde Derde* (1672), Tiele 6217.

pamphlet was entirely personal: Gruwardt tried to convince his audience to help him to arrest the man who had raped his daughter.⁸¹

From the late sixteenth to the early seventeenth century, one in five pamphlet authors was a preacher.⁸² However, to characterise pamphleteering as the realm of the clergy would go too far. Willem Frijhoff and Marijke Spies have rightly argued that the preacher's role in pamphleteering has been exaggerated.⁸³

A large number of authors were academics. In 1672, for example, the renowned scholar Ulricus Huber published *Spiegel van Doleantie*, which has been characterised as "one of the most intelligent pamphlets of the entire year".⁸⁴ However, the fact that Leiden, the second-largest publishing city of the Dutch Republic, did not rank high on the list of publications from 1672 is an indicator that scholars were not keen to commit to a political cause publicly. There are two possible explanations for this lacuna: that scholars were not involved in popular political publications or that scholars published anonymously. The first explanation is unlikely. We have several examples of professors who published pamphlets, and there is no reason to think academia felt uninvolved in politics, although one pamphleteer did claim that highly educated authors were not part of pamphleteering because "they understood only Latin".⁸⁵ Some anonymous authors did not hide their classical education. One pamphleteer began his story by explaining that "in school I have learned French, but none of their ways, while my Latin is fluent, I also know some Greek".⁸⁶ Sometimes a pamphleteer's high education was apparent without the author referring to the classics or using untranslated Latin. When authors wrote v.v. instead of w, they used the Latin alphabet, which hints at an education that involved writing in Latin.⁸⁷ Moreover, scholars had been educated to produce polemic. Students in Amsterdam were taught how to produce occasional poetry at the Atheneum Illustre, which can be considered an education for pamphleteering. The pamphleteer Johan Blasius enjoyed such an

⁸¹ F. Gruwardt, *Index van de Voorgaende Deductie, Ampleatie en Appendix* (1672), Knuttel 10638a.

⁸² Harline, *Pamphlets*, 103.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 361.

⁸⁴ Huber, *Spiegel Van Doleantie*, Knuttel 10591. Geyl, "Democratische Tendenties in 1672," 72.

⁸⁵ *Trits van Verstande. Pen en Inkt. Brillaris en Pasquilis met zijn oude Profecyen* (1672), Knuttel 10373.

⁸⁶ *Haeghe Nouvelles De Rarité, moy Curieux de Ms. Witten* (1672), Knuttel 10417.

⁸⁷ *Erbarmelycke t'Samen-sprake* (1672), Knuttel 10364.

education and wrote at least fourteen occasional poems at the Atheneum.⁸⁸ According to Piet Verkruijsse, “high literature and popular literature often came from the same pen”.⁸⁹ All in all, it is safe to assume that scholars (professors and students) were involved in pamphleteering. Nevertheless, it is also probable that their percentage of the total pamphlet production was lower than their percentage of the total book production.

The last group – besides government, the clergy and academics – to leave an unmistakable mark on pamphleteering was citizens, or “untrained authors”.⁹⁰ This category encompasses individuals who were non-governing and non-academic, such as the innkeeper Jan Zoet, the glass-maker Jan Vos, and the poet Hans van Bulderen. Pamphlets could also be written by more than one author. These collective publications often came from members of the city militia. According to Stephen Crisp, the houses of the city militia were “filled with dirty discourses”.⁹¹ It has been argued that if we define literature broadly, there is simply no class from which authors were not drawn. Authors from the lowest classes are rare, but they can be found. Jan Jansz van Asten, who made protective covers for sails (a *huikmaker*), wrote a book of ballads in the 1640s, as did the soldier Johan van Broekhuizen, while the farmer Cornelis Maertsz published the song-book *The Singing Nightingale* in 1671.⁹²

Sometimes pamphlets were written by barely literate men. The preacher Willem Symonsz published a pamphlet with the help of a man called Boogaart Zaandar. Most likely Symonsz provided the content – the pamphlet was a comparison between current events and Alexander the Great, which hints at an education – and Zaandar wrote the pamphlet, which due to the terrible spelling was barely readable.⁹³ Their argument, however, which boiled down to the idea that people should support the prince of Orange but can never be forced to do so because of their innate freedom of conscience, was of extraordinarily high quality.

⁸⁸ D. van Miert, “Retoriek in de Republiek. Vormen en functies van academische oraties in Amsterdam in de zeventiende eeuw,” *De zeventiende eeuw* 19, no. 1 (2003): 78.

⁸⁹ Verkruijsse, “De verspreiding van populaire literatuur”. Cf. Mameren, “De gazo-phylace,” 41; Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 241.

⁹⁰ Cf. Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, 215–216.

⁹¹ S. Crisp, *De Gronden en Oorsaecken, vande Ellende der Nederlanden ontdeckt* (1672), Knuttel 10629, 10; G.W. Kernkamp, *De Regeeringe van Amsterdam. Soo in 't civiel als crimineel en militaire* (1653–1672). *Ontworpen door Hans Bontemantel*, vol. 2, ('s Gravenhage, 1897), 209.

⁹² Grootes, “De literator,” 372–380; M.A. Schenkenveld-Van der Dussen, *Nederlandse Literatuur in de tijd van Rembrandt* (Utrecht, 1994), 32. Cf. Sawyer, *Printed Poison*, 53.

⁹³ W. Symonsz and B. Zaandar, *Diogenus Tonne-Rollen Ten tijden van Keysar Alexandar de Groot* (1672), Tiele 6177.

Unearthing the identity of pamphleteers can be tricky business, especially since such details were often spread by competing authors, which means that the veracity of this information is in doubt. One pamphleteer claimed of the author of the pamphlet *Ontknooping van den Valstrik*, “his pen is that of a peasant, and his ink stinks of piss”.⁹⁴ The author of the pamphlet *Kipperson*, who was entangled in a polemic with an author who called himself Brillerus, claimed that he knew who Brillerus was: “He is a chimney sweep who lives in the Nachtwerkersstraat”.⁹⁵ The same Brillerus, however, was accused in another pamphlet of being the head of the Amsterdam printers’ guild.⁹⁶ Considering all such different groups, we can safely conclude that no one monopolised pamphleteering. We see politicians, preachers, scholars, citizens and, highly exceptionally, members of the lowest social classes. In general, we can safely say with Raymond that “most authors of pamphlets were educated members of the middling sort”.⁹⁷

Printers

Once an idea had been turned into a text by an author, it had to be printed. Before we look inside the print shop at the production process of the pamphlet, we have to pause for a moment and ask how a text reached a printer. The first step for a producer was to find a printer who was willing to issue the pamphlet. This was not always easy, as the example provided by the lawyer Adriaan van der Goes from The Hague shows. Van der Goes had contacts with several printers who were always in need of news. These printers, however, chose their material carefully. Van der Goes complained that a certain printer had not accepted a letter from a man called Wurst that he had offered him because the printer “did not believe that it was real”.⁹⁸ The printer made a good call because Van der Goes doubted the authenticity of the letter as well. According to the lawyer, he had copied it from a certain Holick, who had received it from one Heer Kintsschot. Van der Goes eventually admitted, “All my writing is from hearsay, since I was

⁹⁴ *Trits van Verstanden*, Knuttel 10373.

⁹⁵ *Kipperson*, Knuttel 10489, 5.

⁹⁶ *Oprechte Vermeerderde Brillen*, Knuttel 10488, 2.

⁹⁷ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 58.

⁹⁸ C.J. Gonnet, *Briefwisseling tusschen de gebroeders Van der Goes (1659–1673) uitgegeven door C.J. Gonnet. Tweede Deel*, (Amsterdam, 1909), 333–334.

not in the meeting myself".⁹⁹ On another occasion Van der Goes offered two "little books" to a printer who simply "did not feel like printing it".¹⁰⁰

These examples show that despite, or perhaps as a consequence of, the intense competition in the Dutch publishing industry, printers did not accept just anything. Printers knew what would sell and they knew what was risky business. Nonetheless, many reports turned out to be nothing more than rumour.¹⁰¹ On 14 July 1672, for example, a rumour was spread in Amsterdam that the prince of Orange had been killed.¹⁰² Eleven days later, another rumour in Amsterdam told that several members of the States of Holland had been arrested in The Hague.¹⁰³ The next day, a published rumour stated that ambassador Pieter de Groot – the son of Hugo de Groot and a newly appointed regent in Rotterdam – had been arrested for treason.¹⁰⁴ On 25 August 1672, news spread that Louis XIV had died.¹⁰⁵

There was another way in which printers received material. In possession of a pamphlet, a bookseller might turn to a local printer, whom he commissioned to print a small number of copies. The bookseller would then sell his stock in one town and have a new batch printed by another printer in the next.¹⁰⁶

Many authors (and institutions) worked with the same printer on a regular basis. Jacobus Scheltus was *Landts drucker* [national printer] and *ordinaris drucker* [regular printer] for the States of Holland and in 1672 also became regular printer for the prince of Orange. Like countrywide or provincial political bodies, cities preferred to use regular printers. Jan Rieuwerts was city printer for Amsterdam; Abraham van Waesberge held this position in Rotterdam and Laurens van der Wiel in Schiedam; Meinardus van Dreunen printed all governmental publications in Utrecht. Moreover there were publishers who worked regularly for individual authors. Johannes Rothe usually printed his publications with the Amsterdam bookseller Pieter Arentsz. Arend Tollenaar used Jacobus

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 348.

¹⁰¹ Cf. H. van Nierop, " 'And Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars'. Rumour and the Revolt of the Netherlands," in *Public Opinion and Changing Identities in the Early Modern Netherlands. Essays in Honour of Alastair Duke*, ed. J. Pollmann and A. Spicer (Leiden/Boston, 2007).

¹⁰² Gebhard, "Een dagboek uit het rampjaar 1672," 63.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 68.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 69.

¹⁰⁵ *Missive uyt Parys, weeghens het haestelijck overlijden van den Koning van Vrankryck* (1672), Tiele 5954.

¹⁰⁶ Harline, *Pamphlets*, 89–90.

Scheltus, while Johan Blasius was a regular at the print shop of Hendrik Boom in Amsterdam.¹⁰⁷

In addition to these established regular printers, there were many upstarts on the scene. During the summer of 1672, a new generation of writers, printers and publishers tried its chances on the publication market for the first time. Claus Pietersz de Lange printed his only production in 1672.¹⁰⁸ The influx of new names made the more experienced publishers nervous. In one dialogue a character complained, "There are new pamphleteers who have come to destroy our trade".¹⁰⁹

Production Process

Once a text had reached a print shop, the printer needed to assess whether the publication was attractive, ideologically or financially. Financing a pamphlet was not often an insurmountable problem, since the production cost of a pamphlet was relatively low. A group of rich merchants would often finance the production of books and large projects that took months, maybe even years, but such financial backers were not necessary in the case of pamphlets. Paper was one of the largest cost factors, but most pamphlets did not take too much paper. Because of the fast sales, pamphlets were a low-risk commodity.¹¹⁰ Producing a pamphlet in an edition of two hundred copies would cost about six to eight guilders. The revenue could amount to twenty guilders.¹¹¹

A working week in a large print shop was six ten-to-fourteen-hour days.¹¹² During a week of hard work, a print shop could produce between 48,000 and 72,000 pages.¹¹³ These numbers are absolute maximums, but still, the output in the Dutch Republic had to be impressively large, since the Dutch Republic had hundreds of active printers at any particular moment during the seventeenth century.¹¹⁴ This output was by no means made up only of pamphlets, nor is it clear that printers always pushed the press's capacity. Printers often worked on several products at one time.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Hoftijzer, *Engelse boekverkopers*, 137.

¹⁰⁸ *Der Keulscher Bauren Vatter Unser* (1672), Knuttel 9942.

¹⁰⁹ 't *Hollandts Venezoen in Englandt gebacken*, *Wederleyt door d'Amsterdamse Pastey-Backer* (1672), Knuttel 10618, 1.

¹¹⁰ Dijstelberge, "Ik wil dat er gelezen wordt," 50; Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 73; Hoftijzer, *Engelse boekverkopers*, 71–73.

¹¹¹ Dijstelberge, "Ik wil dat er gelezen wordt," 50.

¹¹² Lankhorst, *Reinier Leers*, 23–32.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 23. Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 80.

¹¹⁴ Groenveld, "The Mecca of Authors?," 65; Harline, *Pamphlets*, 21.

Raymond has claimed that pamphlets were usually printed in between other more time-consuming projects, such as books, and he proposes that printing a pamphlet took about three days. During times of crisis, however, pamphlets became more important than books and the priority of the publications changed. The book *A Vindication of the Answer to the Humble Remonstrance*, printed in 1641 in England, was over 230 pages in length. Its printer apologised that “the crowding in of so many little Pamphlets into the Press hath for many weeks detained this Book, to the great grief of the Authors”.¹¹⁵

A common print run lay somewhere between 500 and 1500 copies.¹¹⁶ Normally, there were no more than ten editions.¹¹⁷ As with nearly every other number concerning pamphlets, the figures for 1672 were out of the ordinary. In 1672, 712 pamphlets appeared in a single edition, 158 in two editions, 53 in three editions, 23 in four editions, 16 in five editions, 16 in six editions, 6 in seven editions, 4 in eight editions, 4 in nine editions, 1 in ten editions, 2 in eleven editions and 1 in thirteen editions. The final pamphlet, *De Worsteling Jacob*, was still being reprinted in the nineteenth century, which makes the final number of its editions something we can only guess at.¹¹⁸

After a pamphlet had been printed, the production was not yet complete. The paper had to be pressed for several hours, during which time the ink dried into it. This procedure meant that the weather could influence the printing process. During a hard winter, presses could not be used because the ink would freeze and the paper would not dry. After the pamphlet was finished, the pages were not bound but instead were sewn together with two stitches after purchase.¹¹⁹

All in all, pamphlets were meant to be produced and distributed as fast as possible. The most important change in pamphleteering during the seventeenth century was the growing speed of this process.¹²⁰ Harline can claim with good reason that a delay of a month or two during the first

¹¹⁵ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 80, 201. Cf. Lankhorst, *Reinier Leers*, 23.

¹¹⁶ Weekhout, *Boekcensuur*, 176, 82; Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 80; Harline, *Pamphlets*, 21. Cf. M. Keblusek, “Nieuwsvoorziening in de Republiek. De Engelse burgeroorlog in Haagse drukken,” in *Tekens en teksten: cultuur, communicatie en maatschappelijke veranderingen vanaf de late middeleeuwen*, ed. A. Knotter, Henk Klever and F.van Vree (Amsterdam, 1992), 64.

¹¹⁷ Harline, *Pamphlets*, 21.

¹¹⁸ G.T. Hartong, “‘De Worsteling Jacob’ als pamflet,” *Documentatieblad Nadere Reformatie* 4, no. 1 (1980).

¹¹⁹ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 81–82; Lankhorst, *Reinier Leers*, 21.

¹²⁰ Lankhorst, *Reinier Leers*, 21.

decades of the century “did little to destroy a pamphlet’s timeliness”, but in 1672 pamphlets were produced, sold and read within days. A slower production process could destroy a pamphlet’s objective.¹²¹ In an ideal situation, setting and printing a pamphlet of eight to twelve pages took a couple of hours. If a text was handed in at a printer in the morning, the pamphlet could be ready for sale in the afternoon. Cornelis de Witt was sentenced at nine o’clock in the morning on 20 August, and the text of the verdict was printed and spread among crowds in The Hague “within hours”.¹²² However, news from other provinces could sometimes take a while to appear, especially if the town from which the news came was besieged. It was six days, for example, before a news story from Groningen was printed and spread in Amsterdam in July 1672.¹²³

Pamphlets themselves made many references to the speed of news and publications. These references can be read as rhetorical tricks to lure the reader into a mode of urgency, but in general, they also indicate that a pamphlet was produced within a timeframe of hours, not days.¹²⁴ A character in a dialogue told his fellow debaters that their conversation would probably appear in print “before the night is over”.¹²⁵ No matter how fast a pamphlet was printed, for it to reach a large audience, there was one more step to be taken. It had to be distributed.

From Printer to Reader

A pamphlet that had been printed and distributed to printers in other cities was a “stone that has been thrown, out of [a printer’s] power”.¹²⁶ Printer and pamphlet indeed usually said their last goodbyes when the pamphlet rolled from the presses. The distribution of pamphlets was mostly the field of professional booksellers, who could be found in their bookstores.¹²⁷ Before anyone was permitted to sell publications in a store, he had to be member of a guild and with this membership came many rules and restrictions.¹²⁸ As a member of a guild, the bookseller was, for example, prohibited from selling books outside his own city. For most booksellers,

¹²¹ Harline, *Pamphlets*, 92–93.

¹²² Gebhard, “Een dagboek uit het rampjaar 1672,” 88–90. Cf. Dijkstra, “Ik wil dat er gelezen wordt,” 50.

¹²³ *Missive uyt Groningen*, Van Alphen 379.

¹²⁴ *Autentycke Copya Uyt de Missive geschreven uyt Groeningen* (1672), Knuttel 10523a.

¹²⁵ *Trits van Verstanden*, Knuttel 10373.

¹²⁶ Harline, *Pamphlets*, 80.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 88. Salman, “Het nieuws op straat”.

¹²⁸ Mourik, “Het boekverkopergilde in Rotterdam,” 466, 73.

this often meant finding a way around the rules of the guild.¹²⁹ At times, printers would print more copies than the producers asked them to; the additional copies were subsequently sold under the counter.¹³⁰ When the prince of Orange banned pamphlets altogether in September 1672, he showed a glimpse of the practice of this illegal sphere of pamphlet distribution. The prince complained about pamphlets that were spread “to booksellers in all the cities, without the name of the author or printer, not even with a proper enclosed letter, but with a simple note that was not even signed, so that the producers could never be found”.¹³¹ Printers’ servants and apprentices were commonly involved in this illegal distribution.¹³²

Many publications were sold through itinerant booksellers or travelling peddlers.¹³³ These men, who carried their commodities on their back, sold small publications such as pamphlets, almanacs and songs instead of heavy atlases or leather-bound bibles. Peddlers sold their stock to (and in) coffeehouses, inns and bars, where the merchandise was often nailed to the wall for everyone to read.¹³⁴ Harmanus de Koning from Amsterdam was one of these peddlers. He described how he got his hands on several publications in 1747 and “went to the coffeehouses with two colleagues, and there we sold our goods”.¹³⁵

People who tried to sell pamphlets on the street and in crowded places had to promote their product. One way was to yell or sing part of the pamphlet. A downside of this strategy was that the seller exposed himself to authorities. On 21 November 1637, a man called Hoekelum was fined in Groningen for “singing a pamphlet”.¹³⁶ In 1672 Jan Leenderts and Carel Jansen, both “singers” by profession, were arrested for hawking pamphlets in Amsterdam.¹³⁷

Besides being part of the day-to-day scenery, the distribution network made sure that news and opinion travelled at an unparalleled speed in the Dutch Republic. We have already seen that booksellers who got their

¹²⁹ Harline, *Pamphlets*, 78; Hoftijzer, “Between Mercury and Minerva,” 128; Salman, “Het nieuws op straat,” 56.

¹³⁰ Mourik, “Het boekverkopersgilde in Rotterdam,” 474.

¹³¹ *Publicatie* (1672), Van der Wulp 4870.

¹³² Harline, *Pamphlets*, 88–90.

¹³³ Salman, “Het nieuws op straat,” 59.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 63, Sharpe, “Introduction,” 5.

¹³⁵ Salman, “Het nieuws op straat,” 59.

¹³⁶ A.H. jr. Huussen, “Censuur in Stad en Ommelanden van Groningen 1594–1795,” *Jaarboek voor Nederlandse Boekgeschiedenis* 2, no. 1 (1995): 18.

¹³⁷ Harms, “Handel in Letteren,” 216–220.

hands on a pamphlet could go to a printer to produce more copies. For the distribution of pamphlets this means that peddlers could sell their stock in one town and take one copy to the next town where they started over.¹³⁸ According to Paul Dijstelberge, in light of this infrastructure, distribution to other cities could take place on the same day.¹³⁹ This speed is reflected in comments in pamphlets. "The post wants to travel because it is past ten" one pamphleteer ended his story suddenly.¹⁴⁰ According to Frijhoff and Spies, a letter could be sent from The Hague to Delft, Rotterdam and Leiden and answered on the same day.¹⁴¹ This fast distribution of post, news and publications was mostly made possible by the close-knit infrastructure of 658 kilometres of barge routes that ran through the Republic and the coach service that ran twice a day between several cities, most importantly between Amsterdam and The Hague. Besides giving distributors of news in the Dutch Republic the chance to reach all provinces in one day, transportation on barges was considerably cheaper than comparable transport in other countries.¹⁴² The poet Hans van Bulderen claimed that one anonymous pamphleteer, whom he mockingly called "Midas", had published a pamphlet that was spread "by carriages, by carts and in barges". The pamphlet was sent to Delft, Weesp and Leiden, from where it spread like wildfire.¹⁴³

The sale of a pamphlet by a peddler or in a bookstore was not the end of its distribution. Pamphlets often had a second or third life. When someone had read a publication, it was customary to pass it along. Pamphlets were sent to family members by mail, they were given to friends, and they were left in the houses of city militia for everyone to read.¹⁴⁴ Readers were themselves part of the distribution network. It is time to take a closer look at this audience.

Readers

The most important conclusion of recent research on readers has doubtlessly been the realisation that reading could be a political act.¹⁴⁵ Reading

¹³⁸ Harline, *Pamphlets*, 88–90.

¹³⁹ Dijstelberge, "Ik wil dat er gelezen wordt," 50.

¹⁴⁰ *Brief geschreven uyt 's Gravenhage* (1672), Tiele 6068.

¹⁴¹ Frijhoff and Spies, 1650, 169.

¹⁴² J. de Vries, *Barges and Capitalism. Passenger Transportation in the Dutch Economy, 1632–1839* (Utrecht, 1981).

¹⁴³ Van Bulderen, *Op de Leugenaers*, Knuttel 10501, 3.

¹⁴⁴ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 83–84.

¹⁴⁵ Sharpe, "Introduction," 18; Baker, "Politics and Public Opinion," 206–212.

was not necessarily a solitary act. Collective reading was still as important as individual reading. Pamphlets were read in groups, in houses of city militia, on barges, in bars and even on the street.¹⁴⁶ And pamphlets were discussed after they had been read, which made the interpretation of a text an act that was even more part of a collective effort than the reading itself.¹⁴⁷

The realisation that reading meant acting politically has influenced the inclusion of groups in pamphlet audiences. Although there has been a recent tendency to include virtually everybody in the realm of political communication, we should not be too optimistic.¹⁴⁸ The author of the pamphlet *Brillerus Sondags Praetje* suggested limits to pamphlet readership when he claimed that the verdict on Cornelis de Witt that was published on 20 August 1672 was for most people too difficult to understand "like five times three".¹⁴⁹ A character in a dialogue complained that he had tried to get his wife to read a pamphlet, but "he could not make her understand everything".¹⁵⁰ It would, however, be nonsensical to claim that pamphlets were reserved for elites only. To get a more comprehensive understanding of the audience for pamphlets rather than this rigid and anachronistic dichotomy, we must look at the evidence in more depth.

In Search of an Audience: Direct Evidence

According to Craig Harline, four factors affected the consumption of pamphlets: literacy, availability, cost and interest. In the Dutch Republic, conditions on all these counts favoured the inclusion of the "common man" in the pamphlet audience.¹⁵¹ The most important condition for engaging in popular political culture was the ability to read. In comparison to other states, Dutch literacy rates were high. Many contemporaries and historians have placed the Dutch Republic among the most literate societies in Europe. For the Dutch, being illiterate was, according to Rudolf Dekker,

¹⁴⁶ H.A. Enno van Gelder, *Getemperde vrijheid. Een verhandeling over de verhouding van Kerk en Staat in de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden en de vrijheid van meningsuiting in zake godsdienst, drukpers en onderwijs, gedurende de 17e eeuw* (Groningen, 1972), 156; Keblusek, "Nieuwsvoorziening in de Republiek," 60.

¹⁴⁷ Raymond, "Irrational, impractical and unprofitable," 189; S.N. Zwicker, "The Constitution of Opinion and the Pacification of Reading," in *Reading, Society and Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. K. Sharpe and S.N. Zwicker (Cambridge, 2003), 295.

¹⁴⁸ A. Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print*, 12; Harris, "Propaganda and Public Opinion," 51.

¹⁴⁹ *Brillerus Sondags-Praetje* (1672), Knuttel 10490, 6.

¹⁵⁰ *Eenvoudig Burgerpraetje*, Knuttel 10014, 6.

¹⁵¹ Harline, *Pamphlets*, 63.

even a reason for shame.¹⁵² When Joseph Scaliger arrived from France in the Dutch Republic in 1593, he found, to his amazement, that in Holland even the servants could read.¹⁵³ We should not, however, take such foreign accounts of Dutch literacy at face value. In 1567, Ludovico Guicciardini wrote in his *Descrittione di tutte le Fiandra* that all Dutch peasants could read, which was a clear exaggeration.¹⁵⁴ The size of the reading population in the Dutch Republic or in any other western European country has been the subject of fierce discussion. We can say with some certainty that about seventy per cent of Dutch men and forty per cent of Dutch women could read during the second half of the seventeenth century.¹⁵⁵ It is probably more important to note, however, that literacy rates differed according to social classification, gender, religion, occupation and geography. Women were in general less literate than men. Peasants were less literate than inhabitants of urban areas. Catholics were less literate than Protestants. Hollanders were more literate than the inhabitants of the other provinces. Merchants and shopkeepers were more inclined to read than day labourers. This means that male inhabitants of the urban areas in the coastal provinces who supported the Reformed religion and worked in the city where they lived – in short the citizens that are the subject of this study – were likely to come across printed material and be able to understand it.¹⁵⁶

Besides being able to read, the audience should also have easy access to pamphlets. This was without a doubt the case in the Dutch Republic. A pamphleteer from The Hague wrote, “the extraordinary discourses that I hear in barges, inns, or on the street are so many, that it would cost me an entire book of paper and a lot of time to describe all of them”.¹⁵⁷ A character in a dialogue simply referred to “the pamphlets that appear daily”.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵² R. Dekker, *Lachen in de Gouden Eeuw. Een geschiedenis van de Nederlandse humor* (Amsterdam, 1997), 26. Cf. Verkruijsse, “De verspreiding van populaire literatuur”; Frijhoff and Spies, 1650, 237; Haley, *The Dutch in the Seventeenth Century*, 72; G. Parker, “An Educational Revolution? The Growth of Literacy and Schooling in Early Modern Europe,” *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 93, no. 1 (1980): 218–220.

¹⁵³ Israel, *De Republiek*, 757.

¹⁵⁴ V.B. Voss, A.M. van der Woude and E.P. de Booy, “Socioculturele geschiedenis 1500–1800. Onderwijs en opvoeding,” in *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* (Haarlem, 1979), 257.

¹⁵⁵ Dijstelberge, “Gemengde berichten,” 282.

¹⁵⁶ Dekker, *Lachen in de Gouden Eeuw*, 27; Parker, “An Educational Revolution?,” 212–213; Voss, “Socioculturele geschiedenis,” 262; Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 89; Frijhoff and Spies, 1650, 238.

¹⁵⁷ *Brief uyt 's Gravenhage* (1672), Knuttel 10281.

¹⁵⁸ *Vrymoedige Aenspraek* (1672), Knuttel 10291.

Even pamphlets in specialised fields were easily obtained. The Englishman Michael Honywood claimed that he bought “pamphlets from England in The Hague every day”.¹⁵⁹

The Dutch Republic had the highest urbanisation rate in Europe before the nineteenth century. During the seventeenth century, forty-two per cent of all Dutch inhabitants lived in a city with at least 2500 inhabitants. In the province of Holland this figure was sixty-one per cent. Around the middle of the seventeenth century, the Dutch Republic had twenty-three cities with more than 2500 inhabitants. In addition, there were nineteen large cities with more than 10,000 inhabitants in the Dutch Republic. At the end of the century, Holland had more than ten cities with more than 15,000 inhabitants, four of which had more than 25,000.¹⁶⁰ The difference from surrounding European states was, however, not just in urbanisation but also, and more importantly, in semi-urbanisation. Many states had large cities, but the Dutch Republic had a high number of cities that were surrounded by large villages. Consequently, the Dutch Republic resembled a quilt of (semi-)urbanised areas.¹⁶¹ Cities were the best places to find news. When Teun, a character in a dialogue, asked his friend Jaap to explain recent political events, Jaap simply answered, “go to the city, where there are letters for sale wherein you can read everything from a to z”.¹⁶² In cities, pamphlets and newspapers hung from the windows of bookstores or were nailed to the doors of public places. The availability of pamphlets and the thirst for news and opinion are illustrated by the fact that forbidden pamphlets were normally sold out within a day.¹⁶³ In highly urbanised areas such as the Dutch Republic, claimed Michael Mendle “the pamphlet culture was impossible to ignore”.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ M. Keblusek, “Boeken in Ballingschap. De betekenis van de bibliotheek van Michael Honywood voor de royalistische gemeenschap in de Republiek (1643–1660),” *Jaarboek voor Nederlandse Boekgeschiedenis* 2 (1995).

¹⁶⁰ H. Roodenburg, “Naar een etnografie van de vroegmoderne stad: De ‘gebuyrten’ in Leiden en Den Haag,” in *Cultuur en maatschappij in Nederland 1500–1850*, ed. P. te Boekhorst, P. Burke and W. Frijhoff (Middelburg/Amsterdam/Heerlen, 1992), 219; M. ‘t Hart, “Town and Country in the Dutch Republic, 1550–1800,” in *Town and Country in Europe, 1300–1800*, ed. R. Epstein (2004), 80; H. Schipper, *Macht in de zeventiende eeuw. Engeland en Nederland kwantitatief vergeleken* (Zutphen, 2001), 16.

¹⁶¹ Frijhoff and Spies, 1650, 156.

¹⁶² *‘t Samen-spraec. Tusschen Jaep en Teun, sijnde Hollandsche Boeren. Een Fransman, sijnde een Soldaet. Ende Nickles, een Engelsman* (1672), Knuttel 9975.

¹⁶³ Harline, *Pamphlets*, 70.

¹⁶⁴ M. Mendle, “News and the Pamphlet Culture of Mid-seventeenth-century England,” in *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe*, ed. B. Dooley and S.A. Baron (London/New York, 2001), 57.

Once an audience had found, or stumbled across, a pamphlet, this audience should also be able to buy it. If a large part of society is to be included in pamphlet culture, prices of pamphlets should have been low. According to several historians, pamphlets were usually not more expensive than “several stivers”. The price of one sheet (eight pages) was 4 to 9 *duiten* (8 *duiten* equalled one stiver). Prices for illustrated pages were much higher: 3 to 5 stivers per sheet.¹⁶⁵ There are examples of far lower prices. A dialogue in 1672 was sold for an *oortje*, which amounted to a little over half a stiver.¹⁶⁶

That a pamphlet was available in abundance, for a low price and in a language that was intelligible for literates was still no guarantee that it would be purchased. Therefore, the audience must have felt the need to acquire it. In short, the audience must have been interested in pamphlets. What we can gather from scattered sources reveals an overwhelming interest in politics, news and pamphlets. According to a pamphleteer from 1672, you could see “everyone walking, buying publications [...] Rich and poor, you can hear no one haggle. Everyone wants to read, whatever it is”.¹⁶⁷

So far, the evidence supports the idea that pamphlets could find a large audience in the Dutch Republic. This evidence is, however, less convincing than often presumed. Being literate does not guarantee that one reads. Being able to pay for a pamphlet does not mean one chooses to prioritise the purchase of a pamphlet over any other commodity. The availability of pamphlets does not give any certainty about the spread of the publications. Articulated interest does not take a possible silent majority into account. All these factors enhance the chance that pamphlet reading was a common activity, but we should still be wary of assuming on the basis of this questionable direct evidence that the reading of pamphlets was as widespread as historians have argued.¹⁶⁸ For more certainty, we must turn to the indirect evidence that can be found in the content of the pamphlets.

¹⁶⁵ O.S. Lankhorst, “‘Die snode uitwerksels van een listige eigenbaat’. Inventarisatie van uitgaven bij intekening in de Republiek tot 1750,” *De zeventiende eeuw* 6, no. 1 (1990): 134; Keblusek, “Nieuwsvoorziening in de Republiek,” 64.

¹⁶⁶ *Oprechte Vermeerderde Brillen*, Knuttel 10488, 2.

¹⁶⁷ *Op het verlaten van de Stad Groeningen door Barent van Galen* (1672), Tiele 6026. Cf. Censer, “Historians and the Press,” 22.

¹⁶⁸ Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print*, 12.

In Search of an Audience: Indirect Evidence

Even if pamphlets had been cheap, available and desired by a large part of the population, hardly any would have been read in the Dutch Republic had all of them been written in Greek. Similarly, an 800-page book on the lawfulness of regicide would hardly have been as effective in inciting a riotous crowd as a catchy slogan or a funny song. Clues about an audience can be found by looking at the different properties of pamphlets. Or, as Harline has claimed “the presentation of an argument could be as important as its substance”.¹⁶⁹

The first step in trying to understand the audience of pamphlets by examining the publications themselves is to look at dedications to a public. If we look at all the 996 original pamphlets of 1672, we can establish that 482 mentioned a specific audience. Authors often posed as “one of the audience” to gain the trust of the reader.¹⁷⁰ Although this does not tell us anything about the author, it is a good indicator of the audience for which he was aiming. Pamphleteers often claimed that they were “of humble descent”, at times a rhetorical trick intended to comfort an audience that the author was of humble descent as well.¹⁷¹ The author of the *Brief uyt 's Gravenhage* wrote in his introduction, “I am but a common man”.¹⁷² Petrus Langedult, a doctor from Haarlem, stressed (and lied) that he was “humble in knowledge and judgement”, that he was “only a young man” and therefore lacked experience.¹⁷³

Secondly, we are also presented with indications of the intended audience when we add rhetoric into the equation. Of the 481 pamphlets that mentioned a specific audience, 128 were aimed specifically at “citizens”. One character in a dialogue asked his partner “to explain himself a little better, not only for his own understanding, but also for the understanding of his ‘fellow citizens’”.¹⁷⁴ Another pamphleteer cried out, “oh my fellow citizens”.¹⁷⁵ In addition to claims that the author was one of the crowd, another much-used method of appeal to the reader was to assume that the writer and his audience had the same ideas or the same goals. At critical

¹⁶⁹ Sawyer, *Printed Poison*, 84–87; Harline, *Pamphlets*, 25; Van Otegem, “Tijd, snelheid, afstand,” 53.

¹⁷⁰ Harline, *Pamphlets*, 30.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Watt, *Cheap Print*, 3; Harris, “Problematising Popular Culture,” 7.

¹⁷² *Brief uyt 's Gravenhage*, Knuttel 10281, 17.

¹⁷³ Langedult, *Kort verhaal*, 1.

¹⁷⁴ *t'Samenspraek, Voor-gesteld van vier Personen* (1672), Knuttel 10022, 4.

¹⁷⁵ *D'Oprechte Oranje Oogen-Salf* (1672), Knuttel 10499, 6.

points in their argument, writers would speak of “we”.¹⁷⁶ The author of the pamphlet *Een Brief uyt Rotterdam* asked “all of us, who are not without eyes, to fight for the prince of Orange”.¹⁷⁷

A third way of appealing to the reader was to approach the audience from an authoritative point of view. Harline has argued that authors used not only examples related to their training but also examples that they thought would make most impact upon their readers – biblical references, historical precedents or historical myths. All were used for a broad domestic audience.¹⁷⁸ The publication exuded authority and brought home the favoured side of the argument.¹⁷⁹

For more details about the audience, we can look at introductions of pamphlets wherein readers were invited to enter a world of make-believe, that although a fantasy, often reflected the real world closely enough to make sense. A pamphlet’s introduction was intended not only to enhance its sales but also, and perhaps more importantly, to “reduce the risk of mis-reading”.¹⁸⁰ Readers were, in short, comforted into joining the political debate. In the pamphlet *’t Hollandts Venezoen in Engelandt gebaken, Wederleyt door d’Amsterdamse Pastey-Backer, tegen sijn buyrman Brandt* two characters named Brandt and Pasteybakker met on the street in front of their homes. Brandt invited his neighbour into his house, saying, “before you go further, please come into my kitchen for a pipe of tobacco and a glass of wine or beer, for I know you love a good pipe”. The Pasteybakker replied, “Well, I cannot refuse, I will be so bold”. Brandt answered, “please sit down, if you will, and let us talk”. To make sure that all readers were comfortable with reading about, and thus engaging in, politics, the writer of this dialogue let the Pasteybakker make a provision before he sat down: “I usually do not discourse politically, or religiously, so when I talk too common, please do not hold me in contempt”.¹⁸¹

Pamphlets were written in the vernacular. In the seventeenth century, more than ninety per cent of all pamphlets were printed in Dutch.¹⁸² The author of the *A.B. Boeck* wrote, “my language is Dutch, because I only seek to be understood by my fellow Dutchmen”.¹⁸³ Since large parts of

¹⁷⁶ M.D., *Den miserabelen Toestant in Over-Yssel* (1672), Zijlstra 1887. Cf. Harline, *Pamphlets*, 30.

¹⁷⁷ *Een Brief uyt Rotterdam van den 10 July 1672* (1672), Knuttel 10153.

¹⁷⁸ Harline, *Pamphlets*, 42.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Sharpe, “Introduction,” 6.

¹⁸⁰ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 95.

¹⁸¹ *’t Hollandts Venezoen in Engelandt gebaken, Wederleyt* Knuttel 10618.

¹⁸² Harline, *Pamphlets*, 31–33.

¹⁸³ *Het Hollandts A.B. Boeck*, Knuttel 10598.

Dutch society were educated in the vernacular, reaching this audience meant addressing them in Dutch. During the sixteenth century, the use of Dutch in the Netherlands surpassed the use of Latin.¹⁸⁴ Such knowledge of the Dutch language has led Harline to claim that pamphlets that included lengthy passages in different languages were “not meant for a popular audience”.¹⁸⁵ It is, however, far from certain that this was the case. Large parts of Dutch society had indeed enjoyed an education in the Dutch language, but we have to be sensitive to the fact that the Dutch educational system during the seventeenth century provided many with some rudimentary knowledge of Latin as well.¹⁸⁶

There were three options for basic-level education in the seventeenth century Dutch Republic: the Latin school for children of the richer parts of society; the French school for the children of the citizenry; and the *Nederduitse* school that was available for children from different social classes and was common in villages, even in very small ones. Scholars believe that the network of schools in the Dutch Republic was denser than in any other European country. At all these schools children learned to read before they learned how to write. Even if the curriculum was not focussed on Latin, some classical verses would be taught. During the seventeenth century, it even became common in the Dutch Republic for the children of the poor to be taught with the financial aid of consistories.¹⁸⁷ For higher education, the Dutch Republic had several universities. The oldest was in Leiden (founded 1575). Other cities followed with their own universities: Franeker (1585), Groningen (1614), Utrecht (1636) and Harderwijk (1636). Amsterdam was not allowed to open a university because the province of Holland already had a university in Leiden; instead the city established the so-called Atheneum Illustre, which was equally prestigious.¹⁸⁸ We can safely conclude that a large part of the Dutch population was educated to some extent. Of this group, many had

¹⁸⁴ J. Jansen, “Purity and the Language of the Court in the Late-Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century-Netherlands,” in *The Vulgar Tongue. Medieval and Postmedieval Vernacularity*, ed. Fiona Somers et al. and Nicholas Watson (2003), 167–168; M.J. van der Wal, *De moedertaal centraal. Standaardisatie-aspecten in de Nederlanden omstreeks 1650* (Den Haag, 1995), 19, 101.

¹⁸⁵ Harline, *Pamphlets*, 32–33.

¹⁸⁶ Frijhoff and Spies, 1650, 245–254.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.; Voss, “Socioculturele geschiedenis,” 281–286; Wal, “De mens als talig wezen,” 9–11; Israel, *De Republiek*, 757; E.P. de Booy, “Naar school. Schoolgaande kinderen in de Noordelijke Nederlanden in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw,” *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 94 (1981).

¹⁸⁸ Voss, “Socioculturele geschiedenis,” 288–298; Miert, “Retoriek in de Republiek”.

at one time during their life enjoyed some form of schooling that included reference to the classics, whether in Latin or in Dutch. Pamphlets that included phrases in Latin were thus not always intended exclusively for the most highly educated, as becomes clear from a character in a dialogue who translated a piece of Latin for the other characters and added, “this [ability to translate] is the result of the little money that my father has paid the Latin masters in school”.¹⁸⁹ According to another character in a dialogue, his story was “made less coarse” by adding some of his “mouldy Latin”, indicating that he was not fluent in Latin. His words also imply that some Dutchmen had once learned some phrases in Latin but were no longer able to write full sentences in that language.¹⁹⁰ We should not, however, overstate the comprehension of a scholarly language by large parts of the audience. Josias Maenhondt had to explain the use of footnotes in his pamphlet to an audience that was not used to them at all.¹⁹¹ Equally ambiguous is the division that is often drawn between the audiences of different font-types. Publications in blackletter font were supposedly meant for an audience of limited education, while other fonts were meant for the more highly educated.¹⁹² The division is visible at times. Translated proclamations were without exception printed in blackletter.¹⁹³ Many pamphlets, however, used both types without apparent distinction. On a broadsheet, several different news stories would be printed in different fonts. One can hardly argue that one news story was meant for “the common man” and another story in the same pamphlet for “elites”.¹⁹⁴ It is true that different editions of the same dialogues were often printed in different fonts, which forces us to wonder whether different font types were at times – when publications appeared daily in a frenzy for publications and when presses ran at full speed – simply the only option for a printer at that moment and not a choice made by a printer in search of a particular audience.¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁹ *Brillen voor alderhande Gesichten* (1672), Tiele 6232, 4.

¹⁹⁰ *Vervolgh Op het Bootsmans Praetje*, Knuttel 10303.

¹⁹¹ J. Maenhondt, *Drouve Nederlandts Klachte* (1672), Knuttel 10634.

¹⁹² Wal, “De mens als talig wezen,” 10. Cf. J. Barry, “Literacy and Literature in Popular Culture: Reading and Writing in Historical Perspective,” in *Popular Culture in England, c. 1500–1850*, ed. T. Harris (London, 1995), 78.

¹⁹³ Keblusek, “Nieuwsvoorziening in de Republiek,” 72.

¹⁹⁴ *Hage den 30 Augustij* (1672), Petit 3948.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. V. van Zuilen, “The Politics of Dividing the Nation? News Pamphlets as a Vehicle of Ideology and National Consciousness in the Habsburg Netherlands (1585–1609),” in *News and Politics in Early Modern Europe (1500–1800)*, ed. J.W. Koopmans (Leuven/Paris/Dudley, 2005), 70.

To attract an audience, argumentation needed not only to be written in language that could be understood but also to use shared cultural references.¹⁹⁶ A reader had to have some knowledge of the classics, the Bible and current events to understand references in pamphlets. A citizen from Rotterdam complained in the dialogue *Eenvoudig Burgerpraatje* that his fellow citizens did not know what “the Cromwellian War” was. “Are you a stranger in your fatherland?” he asked, which gives an indication of the type of historical knowledge expected of someone who wanted to engage in pamphleteering.¹⁹⁷

Historians have also argued that an audience can be determined by looking at the length of a publication and even that every format had its separate audience.¹⁹⁸ In general, we can assume that the shorter the pamphlet, the bigger the chance that it was aimed at a large, at times even “uneducated”, audience. The pamphleteer of the *Wederlegging-gedicht* reacted to another publication and claimed to refute it by being sharper and shorter, tactics he used in order to reach and persuade a large audience.¹⁹⁹ We must always keep in mind, however, that length was only one factor. A short pamphlet could very well be completely incomprehensible for a large audience. Again the *Eenvoudig Burgerpraatje* provides us with some insight, claiming that a publication “could be too short and concise for the common man to understand, or it would be too long and wordy, so we will not have the time to read and remember”.²⁰⁰ Short pamphlets could be too difficult for a large part of the public if they had presupposed too much knowledge, which could not be explained in such a short space. However short and simple they looked at first sight, poems and songs could often demand substantial inside knowledge.

¹⁹⁶ Gibbs, “Press and Public Opinion: Prospective,” 29; A. McShane Jones, “The Gazet in Metre: or the Rhiming Newsmonger. The English Broadside Ballad as Intelligencer. A New Narrative,” in *News and Politics in Early Modern Europe (1500–1800)*, ed. J.W. Koopmans (Leuven/Paris/Dudley, 2005), 145–146. Cf. H. van Nierop, *Oranje boven: Willem van Oranje als zinnebeeld van de natie* (Delft, 2001), 16.

¹⁹⁷ *Eenvoudig Burgerpraatje*, Knuttel 10014, 16.

¹⁹⁸ Harris, “Venerating the Honesty of a Thinker,” 208–210; Sawyer, *Printed Poison*, 39; Sharpe, “Introduction,” 5; C. Dingemanse and M. Meijer Drees, “‘Praatjes’ over de WIC en Brazilië: literaire aspecten van gesprekspamfletten uit 1649,” *De zeventiende eeuw* 21, no. 1 (2005); Van Zuilen, “The Politics of Dividing the Nation?,” 66.

¹⁹⁹ *Wederlegging-gedicht, Van het Lasterschrift, Genaemt, Verhael van 't voornaemste* (1672), Knuttel 10387, 3.

²⁰⁰ *Eenvoudig Burgerpraatje*, Knuttel 10014, 6.

The Multiplier Effect

Our search for an audience is not yet at an end. We must also explore the multiplier effect that historians have attributed to pamphlets and its implication that a pamphlet was consumed by more people than just the purchaser alone. A multiplier of between five and fifty is applied to pamphlets.²⁰¹

This multiplying of the audience was a consequence of several practices. Firstly, pamphlets were not read only by individuals; they were also read aloud. In harbours, markets, inns and on boats, people could hear pamphlets. The illiterate and the poor were included in this way.²⁰² A second custom that enforced the multiplier of the pamphlet audience was the fact that pamphlets were resold, rented out or passed along in wills. There is some limited evidence of pamphlets as part of inheritances. Many pamphlets can be found, for example, in the archives of the family Van Teylingen from Rotterdam. Although it is not at all clear who collected these pamphlets or why, it is evident that the pamphlets in the archive were considered important in their day and were consequently collected and passed on within the family.²⁰³ From Frances Wolfreston of the English gentry, we learn that she inherited pamphlets that had been written before she was born. She also received pamphlets as a gift and purchased previously owned pamphlets.²⁰⁴ It has even been claimed that some hawkers rented out pamphlets.²⁰⁵ Thirdly, pamphlets were copied. Pamphleteers anticipated this practice. A news story about the French retreat from Oudewater, Montfoort, and Woerden ended with the comment, "copy quickly".²⁰⁶ Another pamphleteer ended his story asking the reader to pass the pamphlet along to "all the cities".²⁰⁷

Lastly, pamphlets were spread through intermediaries. A preacher might give a sermon that commented on issues in pamphlet literature; a participant in a discussion at town meetings or a neighbour during

²⁰¹ Gibbs, "Press and Public Opinion: Prospective," 28; Harline, *Pamphlets*, 21; G. de Bruin, *Geheimhouding en Verraad. De geheimhouding van staatszaken ten tijde van de Republiek (1600–1750)* ('s Gravenhage, 1991), 82.

²⁰² Koblusek, "Nieuwsvoorziening in de Republiek," 60.

²⁰³ GAR, 37.01, 81. Cf. Sawyer, *Printed Poison*, 68–71.

²⁰⁴ Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print*, 10.

²⁰⁵ Gibbs, "Press and Public Opinion: Prospective," 28.

²⁰⁶ *Missive Geschreven uyt het Leger leggende bij de Gouderswelfse Sluys* (1672), Petit 3831.

²⁰⁷ Everard Meyster, *Oprechte, Wisse, Waare, Poetische Prophecy aangaande Rust en Vreede* (1672), Knuttel 9936.

everyday conversations on the street or in the marketplace might pass on ideas from a pamphlet.²⁰⁸ The ‘translation’ of the message in a pamphlet before it reached the audience brings us to the most challenging aspect of that audience. The person at the receiving end, the reader, might change the meaning of the message, and to complicate matters further, after the alteration, the reader might pass this changed message on to other people, who might themselves have read the publication.²⁰⁹ Readers changed the meaning of texts. According to Raymond, the early modern reader is now perceived to have been “cautious and intentious, sophisticated and capable of having an interpretive strategy”.²¹⁰ We should think of the audience of pamphlets, whether they read a pamphlet, discussed a pamphlet or interpreted an interpretation of a pamphlet, as the final determining factor in establishing the meaning of a text.²¹¹

The problem with interpretation must not seduce us, however, into thinking that the author, with whom we began this chapter, had little influence on how an audience interpreted his text. Texts and all their properties shaped the response of their readers. As Walter Ong has noted, “the opening pages of *The Canterbury Tales* and *A Farewell to Arms* create a framework that casts the reader in a role he cannot avoid no matter what he thinks of pilgrimages and civil wars”.²¹² Readers interpreted, but they interpreted within certain boundaries. The meaning of a text could change with every step of the production process, but this change operated within limits. One of the most important of these boundaries was that all the participants in the establishment of the meaning of a text – the producer, writer, printer, bookseller, reader and subsequent audiences – were part of the political nation. Interpreting a political text meant performing a political act. The audience of pamphlets resembled Benedict Anderson’s imagined community.²¹³ The advent of this (collective) political audience was, as we have seen, a consequence of literacy, commercial expansion of the press, the formation of some kind of national community and the

²⁰⁸ Sawyer, *Printed Poison*, 69; Rooijakkers, “Opereren op het snijpunt van culturen”.

²⁰⁹ Frijhoff, “Media en sociaal-culturele verandering,” 10.

²¹⁰ Raymond, “Irrational, Impractical and Unprofitable,” 185. Cf. B. Dooley, “News and Doubt in Early Modern Culture,” in *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe*, ed. B. Dooley and S.A. Baron (London/New York, 2001), 282.

²¹¹ Sharpe, “Introduction,” 1–5. Cf. Van Otegem, “Tijd, snelheid, afstand,” 60; Harris, “Propaganda and Public Opinion,” 49.

²¹² Quoted from Darnton, “What is the History of Books?,” 19.

²¹³ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London/New York, 1991 [first edition 1983]).

nearness of the public. A reader interpreted publications in his or her own specific way, but these interpretations were limited by the unwritten rules of the (imagined) political community to which these readers belonged. Influencing an audience by publishing a pamphlet was therefore possible as long as the middle ground of public opinion was respected.

CHAPTER TWO

“THE REMEDY IS WORSE THAN THE PROBLEM”

No one doubted that there was going to be a war. During the first weeks of 1672, diplomats and pamphleteers thought that an attack on the Dutch Republic by Louis XIV (1643–1715) was inevitable. This attack had been coming for years.

Although the Peace of Westphalia (1648) had ended the Thirty Years War, Spain and France continued fighting until 1659. The treaty that followed that conflict placed a time bomb under the European peace. The Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I (1640–1705) and Louis XIV were married to sisters of the Spanish successor to the throne, the mentally and physically weak Carlos II (1640–1700). It was well known that Louis coveted the Spanish-Habsburg lands, including the Southern Netherlands, and he was willing to wait until the soon anticipated death of Carlos. When Carlos did not die, Louis decided to adopt a more aggressive approach. He attacked the Southern Netherlands in 1667 with the objective of luring Spain into a war. In 1672 Louis moved on to the Northern Netherlands. Louis was helped by Maximilian of Bavaria (1621–1688), elector of Cologne, and by Bernard von Galen (1600–1678), bishop of Munster, both of whom had long-running quarrels with the Dutch Republic over several border regions. Both sent their armies in the direction of the Dutch Republic without much hesitation after Louis had paid them to do so.

That England also joined Louis came as a surprise to most Dutchmen, despite the fact that the Republic and England had fought two wars during the 1650s and 1660s. England had joined the Triple Alliance with the United Provinces and Sweden in 1668, in which the countries had promised to come to each other's aid should one of them be attacked by France. No one in the Dutch Republic knew, however, that Charles II had secretly concluded the Treaty of Dover with Louis XIV in 1670. England and France had promised each other military support when one of them needed help. In 1672 Louis was heading for war and asked for help.

The Prince of Orange

“To prevent the Republic from being ruined” explained Johan de Witt to Pieter de Groot (1615–1678) on 18 February 1672, when he pointed out



Fig 3. Allegory: The Dutch virgin is ill. The Dutch lion turns to the prince of Orange for help. Atlas van Stolk, Rotterdam 2322.

the necessity of appointing the prince of Orange to the office of captain-general.¹ The Dutch Republic lacked a military leader during the first weeks of 1672, when diplomatic correspondence and pamphlets showed that war was inevitable.² This caused a massive debate in pamphlets over whether the prince of Orange should be given the position. Under other circumstances De Witt would never have contemplated such an option. Even then, with France and England about to invade the Republic, he believed that this “remedy is worse than the problem.”³ Why, then, did the grand pensionary eventually relent?

¹ Japikse, *Brieven van Johan de Witt. Vierde Deel*, 257.

² R. Hutton, “The Making of the Secret Treaty of Dover, 1668–1670,” *The Historical Journal* 29, no. 2 (1986); P. Sonnino, *Louis XIV and the Origins of the Dutch War* (Cambridge, 1988); P. Rietbergen, “Een edelvrouw in het rampjaar 1672,” *Spiegel Historiae* 3, no. 4 (2005): 116; Dreiskämper, *Redeloos, radeloos, reddeloos*; S. Elzinga, *Het voorspel van den oorlog van 1672. De economisch-politieke betrekkingen tusschen Frankrijk en Nederland in de jaren 1660–1672* (Haarlem, 1926); Franken, *Coenraad van Beuningen*, R. Fruin, *De oorlog van 1672* (Groningen, 1972); Haley, *An English Diplomat in the Low Countries*; J.R. Jones, *The Anglo-Dutch Wars of the Seventeenth-Century* (London/New York, 1996); S. Pincus, “From Butterboxes to Wooden Shoes: The Shift in English Popular Sentiment from Anti-Dutch to Anti-French in the 1670s,” *The Historical Journal* 38, no. 2 (1995).

³ Japikse, *Brieven van Johan de Witt. Vierde Deel*, 219. Cf. Jones, *The Anglo-Dutch Wars*, 186.

Ever since the winter of 1671, when French plans for an attack on the Dutch Republic had become known, the provinces of Zeeland, Gelderland, Friesland, Groningen, Overijssel and Utrecht had supported William's candidacy, while the majority of the province of Holland, led by De Witt, supported the German general Paulus Wirtz (1612–1675). Wirtz, who had been field marshal of the Dutch army, was a man with military experience in the armies of Sweden and Denmark. He was a Holsteiner by birth and carried the title of Baron of Orneholm.⁴ The debate had already escalated to the extent that the six provinces had wilfully retarded the construction of the Dutch defence to put pressure on Holland.⁵ This debate featured an enthusiastic Orangist pamphlet campaign and a group of regents, mostly from Holland, who opposed the prince and only reluctantly joined the discussion.⁶

The wave of pamphlets during the first months of 1672 was not extraordinary in size. January (26 pamphlets), February (24) and March (25) saw monthly publication numbers that were common during the second half of the seventeenth century. The pamphlets from these months, however, do show an interesting disparity from quieter times. Out of the seventy-five pamphlets, twenty-six were published to influence the decision on the appointment of the prince of Orange, that is, one in three pamphlets published during these months debated the same subject. Contemporaries noticed this monopolisation of the news by a single event. Philip Jacob van Bremp, a colonel in the army of the Republic who had returned in February 1672 from an embassy to Cologne, complained that nobody in the Dutch Republic was interested in his stories about Cologne, because "people talked only about appointing or not appointing the captain-general".⁷ The Orangist pamphlets of January, February and March can be seen as a reintroduction of the prince as a public figure.⁸ Pieter de Groot expressed his feelings about such pamphlets on 8 January, when he complained to Johan de Witt that the prince could no longer be considered a "private person".⁹

Gelderland had proposed appointing the prince of Orange captain-general of the army as early as May 1671, in a meeting of the States General.¹⁰

⁴ Fruin, *De oorlog van 1672*, 59.

⁵ Roorda, *Het Rampjaar 1672*, 28.

⁶ Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 151; A. de Wicquefort, "Mémoires," 12.

⁷ Bijl, *Briefwisseling*, 96.

⁸ Cf. Stern, *Orangism in the Dutch Republic*, 180–201.

⁹ N. Japikse, *Brieven aan Johan de Witt. Tweede Deel 1660–1672* (Amsterdam, 1922), 582.

¹⁰ Geyl, *Oranje en Stuart 1641–1672*, 268; Troost, *Stadhouder-koning Willem III*, 75; Israel, *De Republiek*, 875. Cf. Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 150.

This proposal was swept off the table by the delegates from Holland, led by Johan de Witt, who reminded the delegates from the other provinces of the Act of Harmony of 1667. Holland's argument was that since the prince of Orange was already a member of the Council of State, he could not possibly be appointed to a leading position in the army. The prince was not allowed to hold two offices at once. Political and military offices had to remain separated.¹¹ Furthermore, the prince was not yet an adult, which formally excluded him from holding office at all. These arguments, or possibly the arguers, were at this time so powerful, that Gelderland's proposal was not even subject to debate.¹²

In the meeting of the States of Holland six months later, on 4 December 1671, Enkhuizen proposed the elevation of the prince. Again merely mentioning the subject aroused fierce opposition. Although Johan de Witt once more refused to debate the proposal, it was discussed nonetheless that night during the second meeting of the day. Many of the cities with a vote in the States of Holland, most notably Dordrecht and Rotterdam, were at the time still not convinced that the prince of Orange was the best candidate for the job.¹³ When Albrecht van Nierop, one of the councillors of the Court of Holland, argued in the States of Holland with reference to the coming war with France that an "Orangist balm" was the most effective remedy against foreign monarchs, he was mockingly called "the Orangist Orvistan" by the delegates.¹⁴

Besides thinking up nicknames for Orangists, several men prepared a pre-emptive campaign against the Orangist proposal. Johan de Witt visited five noblemen who together had one vote in the States of Holland. Three of them wanted to support the prince, but De Witt convinced them to wait and deliberate some more with the other two members of the nobility. During the subsequent meeting of the States of Holland, De Witt gave a passionate speech wherein he unfolded two arguments against the appointment of the prince. Firstly, having had an "ill and impotent admiral" (Wassenaar-Obdam) and an "old and facile gentleman" (Johan Maurits) as army leaders, now a "young and inexperienced chief" was proposed. De Witt suggested appointing Wirtz, a general with years of experience, and in doing so he appealed again to the issue of capability in excluding the prince of Orange from office.¹⁵ Secondly, De Witt kept

¹¹ Israel, *De Republiek*, 875.

¹² Cf. Geyl, *Oranje en Stuart 1641–1672*, 268–269.

¹³ Gonnet, *Briefwisseling. Tweede Deel*, 333.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 334.

¹⁵ Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 151 Cf. Johan de Witt, *Deductie*, Knuttel 7545.

stressing the "laws and resolutions", most importantly the Act of Harmony. Appointing the prince of Orange would simply be unconstitutional.

"Secretly Prepare the Event"

The meeting of the States of Holland ended without a resolution. The delegates went home for consultation and decided to debate the appointment again during the next meeting of the States of Holland, on 19 January. Between the meetings of 4 December and 19 January the political engine roared at full speed.¹⁶ At the opening of the meeting of 19 January, the opponents of the appointment of the prince of Orange were supported only by Dordrecht, Delft, Gouda, Rotterdam, Hoorn, Den Briel and Monickendam. With the resolutions and the Act of Harmony backing them, though, they felt confident. Orangists had their work cut out. They pursued political activities behind the scenes: the Utrecht nobleman Everard van Weede van Dijkveld (1626–1702), for example, suggested coming to The Hague in December 1671 to "secretly prepare the event", by which he meant William's appointment.¹⁷ At the same time, they tried to appeal emotionally to a wide audience that expected the prince of Orange to be given an office quickly. Pamphlets were the weapon of choice when approaching this audience and took two tacks. Firstly, they stressed the necessity of an Orangist element in Dutch politics and made an argument for change in Dutch politics. Secondly, they made sure that they stayed within the perceived limits of the middle ground of public opinion.¹⁸ This meant that most Orangist pamphleteers were reluctant to argue that William had to be elevated to the office of stadholder, as his ancestors had been. Instead, they argued that he should be given the office of captain-general of the army and admiral-general of the fleet. Military and political leadership would thus be kept separate, as had been proposed by the adherents of the True Freedom ever since the Perpetual Edict of 1667 and recently repeated by Johan de Witt in his argument against promoting the prince.

In the meantime, Orangist pamphleteers argued that there were two main grounds for the elevation of the prince of Orange. Firstly, the army, and the defence of the Dutch Republic, needed a leader. Mathias van

¹⁶ Geyl, *Oranje en Stuart 1641–1672*, 270.

¹⁷ Bijl, *Briefwisseling*, 80. 144.

¹⁸ Cf. Harris, "Propaganda and Public Opinion," 49.

Westhuysen (1642–1679), a doctor from Middelburg, wrote that during times of peace, sea-borne trade should be supported by government to increase wealth, but times of war were an entirely different matter. “War burns all of this down, and dies out fat lands, it bans prosperity, incites to murder and revenge”. This situation needed another type of ruler. Now, a warrior prince was needed, one who had “grown from his saddle”.¹⁹

Secondly, Orangist pamphleteers argued that the unavoidable war against France could be won only with the support of England, which in turn could be obtained only by appointing the prince. When the regents of Enkhuizen proposed the elevation of the prince of Orange to the position of army leader in the meeting of the States of Holland in December 1671, their main argument had been that this act would satisfy the English king, who would “certainly join the Dutch” in the now unavoidable war against France as long as his nephew was appointed to this high position in the Dutch army.²⁰ This idea was repeated in popular publications. The pamphlet *Den Hollandsche Verre-Kyker* claimed that the States General had been ungrateful to England and the House of Orange. “Had England not secured the freedom, sovereignty, wealth, greatness and relief from the outside, while the House of Orange had secured these features from the inside?” asked the pamphleteer.²¹ On 8 January, Pieter de Groot, the Dutch envoy to France, recommended to Johan de Witt that William be made captain-general, “to make a gesture toward England”. De Witt replied, “Many good patriots [he meant some of his own followers, the men of the True Freedom] support Orange nowadays”.²² The grand pensionary was well aware that the prince of Orange would eventually have to be given a considerable office in the Dutch Republic. For now, however, he was not about to give up on Wirtz, his candidate for the position of captain-general. The matter became more difficult with every passing day, for General Wirtz himself, and the entire corps of officers of the army for that matter, supported the appointment of the prince of Orange.²³

To be sure that the audience was not uninformed about what had happened so far, a man going under the pseudonym J.V.H. published a collection of directives and resolutions of the Council of State, the particular

¹⁹ M. van Westhuysen, *Huldekroon Van sijn Hooghdyt* (1672), Knuttel 9965.

²⁰ Israel, *De Republiek*, 875.

²¹ B.I.R., *Den Hollandschen Verre-Kyker* (1672), Tiele 5833, 32. Cf. Westhuysen, *Huldekroon*, Knuttel 9965; Gonnet, *Briefwisseling. Tweede Deel*, 333; Bijl, *Briefwisseling*, 99.

²² Japikse, *Brieven aan Johan de Witt. Tweede Deel*, 581–582.

²³ Geyl, *Oranje en Stuart 1641–1672*, 269, Rowen, *John de Witt. Statesman of the ‘True Freedom’*, 182.

Delegated Council and the States of Holland from the beginning of August until December 1671. The author, who described himself simply as The Composer, had been given permission to search the archives of the several institutions for the sources to combine these documents or had been handed these papers by someone else.²⁴ Besides informing the audience about current events, pamphleteers lauded William in several publications. They stressed his royal heritage for dramatic effect: many witnesses, they wrote, had seen a crown appear in the air whenever the prince appeared in public, "which was seen by all spectators with amazement and great joy".²⁵ The author of *d'Oranje-Boom In Hollants Tuyn* used the analogy of the political body and wrote that the prince of Orange was "a wholesome medicine, who will purify the blood of all bad fluids and make everything good".²⁶

During the first three months of 1672, pamphleteers increasingly connected the prince of Orange to the fatherland. According to Hubert van der Meer the appointment of the prince of Orange made every "Batavian joyful in his heart" and "the fatherland would sing in joy".²⁷ The concept of the fatherland (or patria) became strongly tied to the prince of Orange. After the summer, when the fatherland had walked a precarious tightrope, this connection was stressed all the more strongly.

"Holland Did Not Want It"

The debate between early December and the meeting of the States of Holland on 19 January resulted in an iconic pamphlet that was composed under the guidance of several regents from Zeeland. The publication appeared shortly before the meeting of the States of Holland. The publication itself was the third point on the agenda of that meeting and served as a steppingstone for further discussion on the instruction of the captain-general – a clear sign of its influence. The arguments from the publication were read aloud and debated during the meeting.²⁸ The pamphlet from

²⁴ I.v.H., *Kort ende Waerachtigh Vertoogh* (1672), Knuttel 9954.

²⁵ M.S., *Sinne-beeld*, Van der Wulp 4910.

²⁶ *d'Oranjen-boom in Hollants Tuyn Gestelt* (1672), Knuttel 10628.

²⁷ Van der Meer, *Orange in de Wapenen*, Knuttel 9955. Cf. M. van Eepen, *Veersche Vreughde-Galm en Zege-wensch* (1672), Knuttel 9966; Verhoek, *Op het Veltheerschap*, Tiele 5867; A. Bornius, *Gaudia & Vota Batavorum cum Illustribus* (1672), Tiele 5868; M.S., *Sinne-beeld*, Van der Wulp 4910; Van Balen, *Zegenwensch*, Knuttel 9962.

²⁸ Japikse, *Notulen*, 14.

Zeeland made three points. First of all, it reminded the audience of the inevitability of the appointment of the prince of Orange, which would fend off jealousy, keep politics and the army strictly separated (the argument had been turned on the regents from Holland) and give William the high position he deserved. Dutch history proved that soldiers fought well only under a beloved army leader, and capable generals who were not loved (meaning Wirtz) could not get their soldiers to fight. According to the six provinces, the prince of Orange was loved by the citizenry. Moreover, the threat of war, especially by the English, caused the provinces to hope that a gesture towards the prince would turn the English from the French side to the Dutch. The second goal of the publication was to put as much pressure as possible on the regents from Holland by blaming them for delays in the preparation of the army. The pamphlet pointed out that Holland was the only province that kept the prince from the position of army leader and thereby hindered the formation of the army.²⁹ Lastly, the publication proposed several provisions that would enable Holland to appoint the prince of Orange without contradicting the Act of Harmony. William would be named army leader for one campaign only until he was twenty-three years of age. The stadholderate should be kept separate from the house of Orange, and therefore the young prince would have to swear an oath never to accept the position of stadholder if he accepted the position of captain-general. This condition was a repetition of the Perpetual Edict: the prince of Orange had to exclude himself formally from the stadholderate.³⁰ The result of the meeting of the States of Holland of 19 January was a shift in the debate from the question of whether William should be appointed to the provisions under which he could be made captain-general.³¹

According to Adriaan van der Goes, a lawyer from The Hague who corresponded during 1672 with his brother William in Vienna, the instruction that was offered to the prince was more restricted than that which had been earlier put to Wirtz. The States General therefore wanted to give the prince more authority by making him captain-general for life once he reached the age of twenty-three, which would be on 14 November 1673.³² Holland, Van der Goes wrote, “did not want it”.³³ Holland did, however,

²⁹ *Aen*, Tiele 5861.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Geyl, *Oranje en Stuart 1641–1672*, 272.

³² Troost, *Stadhouder-koning Willem III*, 73.

³³ Gonnet, *Briefwisseling. Tweede Deel*, 333.

support the instruction that offered the office of captain-general for a single campaign, thereby remaining in line with the Act of Harmony.³⁴ A mayor from the town of Numansdorp explained Holland's motivation for this stand. Holland would "find something else" to object to. The strategy was, claimed the mayor, to promote William for one campaign against the French. If the campaign was a failure, the prince of Orange would be blamed. If the campaign was a success, there would be peace again and no longer any need for a captain-general. Holland would then claim that William had been incapable and would have grounds never to promote him again.³⁵ When Van der Goes asked the mayor whether Holland would consider appointing the prince for life, he received the answer, "this will never happen".³⁶ There was one problem though: the strategy would only work "if England will not join the game".³⁷

England

During December 1671 and January 1672, England's position seemed ambiguous. Although Charles II's Francophile tendencies had been noticed, most still believed that the English would remain loyal to the Triple Alliance. In *Den Hollandschen Verre-Kyker*, a dialogue from 1671 that was reprinted in the first days of 1672, an Englishman, Frenchman and Hollander claimed that the French would, without a shred of doubt, attack the Dutch Republic.³⁸ This pamphleteer argued that even if Charles wished to attack the Dutch Republic, parliament and the people would not allow it. The Hollander expressed a view on foreign policy that was commonly accepted in governmental circles in the Dutch Republic at that time: all foreign powers would see that it was in their own interest to oppose a France that was seeking universal monarchy. The author even self-confidently boasted that the Dutch had not yet forgotten the war against Spain and that France was invited to give it a go for eighty years.³⁹

During the first months of 1672, when prophecies for the year to come appeared in print, the Dutch audience was promised a bright future. The pamphlet *Franse Prognosticatie* claimed that England and Sweden would

³⁴ Japikse, *Notulen*, 17.

³⁵ Gonnet, *Briefwisseling. Tweede Deel*, 333.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ B.I.R., *Den Hollandschen Verre-Kyker*, Tiele 5833, 5.

³⁹ Ibid., 15–26.

doubtlessly honour the Triple Alliance.⁴⁰ In reality, however, this scenario was becoming less likely with every passing day. Pieter de Groot, at the time ambassador in France, suggested to Johan de Witt that England was likely to join the French and that one of the last options left to prevent England from joining the war was to “cause disorder in England”.⁴¹

After the meeting of the States of Holland on 19 January, the instruction for one campaign was presented to the prince of Orange. Surprisingly, given how he had lobbied behind the scenes for the appointment, William declined the offer, which forced the politicians back to the drawing board. The debate now concentrated on one point: appointment for life or for a single campaign?⁴² On 4 February, Adriaan van der Goes, who had followed the meetings in The Hague, described the situation to his brother in Vienna. “Appointing a captain-general is not going smoothly. The six provinces want the prince, as well as eleven or twelve cities in Holland, but Dordrecht and her followers only want an appointment for this campaign, which causes disunity. Nothing good is to be expected.”⁴³

The Dutch Republic indeed sat on the edge of its seat. When George Downing, the English ambassador, was called back to England on 5 February, the Amsterdam Stock Exchange dropped from 420 points to 398. Two days later, when a rumour spread that the prince had been appointed, the Stock Exchange climbed back up to 420. When the rumour proved false, it fell ten points again.⁴⁴ On 23 February, the stalemate was broken. Holland chose the prince. The States General reacted on 24 February. William would lead the army for one campaign only, but he would be appointed for life when he reached the age of twenty-three. Holland had succeeded in adding another provision to the office, a personal touch of Johan de Witt: during battles the captain-general was subordinate to the deputies from the States General, which meant that the prince of Orange did not have the power to make his own decisions or move troops. This provision would backfire in the faces of some regents later in the year.⁴⁵

After the promotion, the participants in the discussion published their conclusions. On the surface, all seemed happy with the result. On one end

⁴⁰ H. Wageveldus, *Fransche Prognosticatie, Ofte Prophetische Voorseggingen* (1672), Knuttel 9923.

⁴¹ Japikse, *Brieven aan Johan de Witt. Tweede Deel*, 586.

⁴² Japikse, *Notulen*, 17–24.

⁴³ Gonnet, *Briefwisseling. Tweede Deel*, 341.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 343.

⁴⁵ Roorda, *Het Rampjaar 1672*, 27. Japikse, *Notulen*, 22–30. Cf. Gonnet, *Briefwisseling. Tweede Deel*, 344; Fruin, *Geschiedenis der staatsinstellingen*, 284–287.

of the spectrum, an abstract from the resolutions of the States General that stressed the limitations of the instruction to the prince of Orange was published. That William III was forbidden to accept any possible offer of a stadholderate, to which he swore a new oath, was emphasised. Similarly, he was forbidden to accept titles such as "Ridderschap ende Edelen". Furthermore, he was explicitly prohibited from appointing magistrates in the cities, a privilege that had once belonged to the princes of Orange but that – in Holland at least – had been claimed by local governments ever since the Great Assembly in 1651.⁴⁶ At the other end of the spectrum, publications celebrated William's appointment, glorifying the prince of Orange and his family and relating great expectations of his office. In the pamphlet *Orange in de Wapenen*, the elevation of the prince of Orange was expected to do wonders for the country. The prince of Orange had already filled the state with joy, which the author Hubert van der Meer hoped would "please the Batavian" even more during "the summertime".⁴⁷ Expectations were high because the prince of Orange came "from such a renowned family, from now and earlier centuries" that had "planted the banner of our freedom".⁴⁸ The pamphleteer Antonius van Schayck called the prince simply "the Dutch hope".⁴⁹

Pamphleteers also described the members, accomplishments and belongings of the House of Orange in detail. The pamphlet *Uitstekentheden voorrechten en waerdigheden der Doorluchtigste Princen van Oraenje* summed up, for example, its splendour and power.⁵⁰ This pamphlet was an excerpt from a book that had been commissioned by the Orange family in the 1630s.⁵¹

Secret Negotiations

So far, we have not heard from one of the main figures in the debates over the appointment of a new captain-general: the prince of Orange himself. At first glance, the prince does not seem to have been at all ecstatic about

⁴⁶ *Extract uyt 't Register der Resolutien van de Hoogh Mogende Heeren Staten Generael der Vereenighde Nederlanden* (1672), Knuttel 9957.

⁴⁷ Van der Meer, *Orange in de Wapenen*, Knuttel 9955.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Schayck, *Begroetenisse*, Tiele 5860.

⁵⁰ *Uitstekentheden*, Knuttel 9971.

⁵¹ *Tableau de l'histoire des Princes et Principauté d'Orange* (Den Haag, 1639). Cf. Frijhoff and Spies, 1650, 97.

the entire event.⁵² He mentioned his promotion in a letter to Thomas Butler on 26 February. In the note, he first asked Butler for some fresh horses. Not until the very end of this correspondence did he write, “les Estats m’ont fait Capitaine Général. [...] Adieu”.⁵³ In an answer to a congratulatory letter from Godard Adriaan van Reede van Amerongen (1621–1691), an influential nobleman from Utrecht who was ambassador in Brandenburg in 1672, the only reaction of the prince was that he promised to act as his supporters had anticipated.⁵⁴

Behind the scenes, however, William had been pulling strings to improve his position. First of all, in 1671 he had urged Gelderland and Utrecht to appoint him as quickly as possible to the office of captain-general in their provinces. According to the historian Pieter Geyl, the prince had gone to Arnhem himself to incite his supporters for this undertaking. In a similar vein, in December 1671 he had urged Godard van Reede van Amerongen to force a decision on his appointment as quickly as possible. From a handful of letters between Godard Adriaan van Reede van Amerongen and Everard van Weede van Dijkvelt it becomes clear that the prince of Orange had meddled personally in this appointment. And he had been extremely secretive about it. In letters, the prince called the appointment “the important event”. His meddling worked. Utrecht appointed the prince as their army leader for life on 15 December 1671.⁵⁵

In January 1672, William III started secret negotiations with his uncle Charles II. In the now famous “secret letter” the prince promised to satisfy Charles’s wishes as long as Charles loosened his ties with France. William stipulated that Charles’s demands could not cross the “foundations of the Dutch Republic”, but he was explicitly willing to sacrifice “mister grand pensionary De Witt and his cabal” in order that he and his friends could govern.⁵⁶ Charles never really responded to the content of the proposal

⁵² Japikse, *Prins Willem III. De stadhouder-koning*, 176.

⁵³ Japikse, *Correspondentie van Willem III en van Hans Willem Bentinck*, 43.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁵⁵ Bijl, *Briefwisseling*, 78–91.

⁵⁶ Japikse, *Correspondentie van Willem III en van Hans Willem Bentinck*, 41. Cf. R. Fruin, “Willem III en zijn geheime onderhandelingen met Karel II van Engeland in 1672,” in *De tijd van De Witt en Willem III*, ed. R. Fruin (’s Gravenhage, 1929), 128–129; Rowen, *The Princes of Orange*, 125–126; Japikse, *Prins Willem III. De stadhouder-koning*, 177; Haley, *An English Diplomat in the Low Countries*, 286; Haley, “William III,” 39–40; Jones, *The Anglo-Dutch Wars*, 197; Krämer, “Prins Willem III en de historische critiek,” 457–458; Geyl, *Oranje en Stuart 1641–1672*, 273–275; Roorda, *Het Rampjaar 1672*, 25–26; Troost, *Stadhouder-koning Willem III*, 74–75.

other than sending a letter in reply a month later, in which he said that he did not believe that William "could effect what [he] should undertake".

William was left with his military task in the Dutch Republic. As the new captain-general he had the defence of the entire Republic to manage.⁵⁷ First, however, he stayed in The Hague for a week and made himself visible to the public eye. When the prince accepted the office of captain-general and admiral-general, a pamphleteer from Middelburg who visited The Hague saw "great joy on the streets" and an "abundance of people that came from everywhere".⁵⁸ Following the appointment, a celebratory dinner was organised in The Hague for the prince. At night great bonfires could be seen at all street-corners, and even on the Binnenhof, where the regents met, there was great joy. "One could hear small guns being fired. The boys ran around the streets with flying banners yelling 'Viva le prince Orange'."⁵⁹ It was said that people from the entire province of Holland travelled to The Hague to see the prince enjoy his dinner. Adriaan van der Goes noted visitors from Leiden, Delft and Rotterdam in The Hague and thought these citizens "unusually happy".⁶⁰

The public dinner in honour of the prince of Orange shows that Orangism was very much alive at this time in the Dutch Republic. The remains of the dessert were distributed among those watching the dinner. An orphan from Leiden started a fight after he lost his hat during the pushing and shoving over the food. When the prince heard about the ruckus, he gave the boy some money to compensate for the loss of his hat. The boy was immediately offered double that amount in exchange for the coin that he had been given by the prince. Even sugar that had been touched by the prince of Orange was sold.⁶¹

The dinner and the celebrations were a popular subject for laudatory poems. Some described the table setting and the fireworks that followed the meal in great detail, in order to show the grandeur of the event. The message of the lion's share of these publications was that the "unity of the state" had been renewed by the army leader and the regents. Moreover,

⁵⁷ Cf. Cambier, *De jaren 1672 en 1673*; O. van Nimwegen, "De republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden in oorlog met Frankrijk (1650–1750)," in *Met Man en Macht. De militaire geschiedenis van Nederland 1550–2000*, ed. J.R. Bruijn and C.B. Wells (Amsterdam, 2003); Sypsteyn, *De verdediging van Nederland*; Fruin, *De oorlog van 1672*.

⁵⁸ *Oprecht Verhael Van Alle het gepasseerde sedert den 24 February tot den 2 Maert* (1672), Knuttel 9961, 3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Gonnet, *Briefwisseling. Tweede Deel*, 352.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 352–355; *Oprecht Verhael*, Knuttel 9961, 3.

pamphleteers believed that the Dutch army would be strengthened swiftly as a consequence of the appointment of this new army leader. As one of the pamphleteers wrote joyfully, "For everything is at last taken in hand, the authority on sea and on land".⁶²

However, as one pamphleteer noted, the relationship between the prince of Orange and the States of Holland had also changed after the vote on Orange's promotion. The situation of the 1650s and 1660s, when the young prince of Orange had been subordinate to the provincial states, had shifted. The pamphleteer, who published his pamphlet in Dutch and in Latin in search of a large audience, revealed a glimpse of things to come, asking, "Was Holland invited by the prince, or was the prince a guest of Holland?"⁶³

Judging from the pamphlets that addressed the issue of the appointment of the prince, Orangist domestic propaganda intended to shift the middle ground of public opinion to include acceptance of the fact that William had to be incorporated into Dutch public life. This shift progressed in stages. Initially, the idea that the prince should be made army leader was combined with the idea that he should never be appointed to the office of stadholder, a position that was in line with the accepted norm of the 1650s and 1660s. The military and political offices had to remain separated. With the appointment of the prince of Orange after months of political bargaining, the defence of the Republic could finally be constructed. The hierarchy of the army was renewed and for now the problem of the incorporation of Orange into the Dutch Republic had been patched up. The focus of public debate almost naturally changed from domestic affairs back to the international situation, as did pamphleteering. After all, the Republic had to be safeguarded against ruin by foreign enemies.

⁶² Baron, *Burgerlicke Zegen-wensch*, Van der Wulp 4899. Cf. *Eeuwigh Gedenckteeken* (1672), Knuttel 9969.

⁶³ *Op de Heerlijcke Maeltijdt* (1672), Tiele 5869.

CHAPTER THREE

DECLARING WAR

During the propaganda campaign to appoint the prince of Orange as army leader, pamphleteers promised a large audience that England would honour its commitment to the Triple Alliance because of the strong bond between the House of Stuart and the House of Orange. Nonetheless, on 23 and 24 March, the Dutch Smyrna fleet was attacked by English battleships near the Isle of Wight.¹ The English had planned to get as big a trophy as possible. The Smyrna fleet was supposedly worth 180 tons of gold.² Three Dutch merchant ships were eventually conquered, but one of them sank before it reached England. The Dutch captain Van Nes went down with the ship and Captain Dubois lost a hand after being hit by a cannonball. Apart from these personal tragedies, the Dutch fleet, much to its own surprise, stayed mostly unharmed. It fled the battle scene and the largest part of the fleet, 62 of the 66 ships, reached the Dutch coast safely. The English had failed in their attempt to reduce the financial burden of the coming war.³

For the Dutch the safe arrival of the Smyrna fleet was fortunate in more than one way. It delivered a considerable fortune, but moreover, England had now been exposed as “an open enemy, instead of a feigned friend”.⁴ In a letter to his brother Cornelis, Johan de Witt articulated similar feelings when he wrote “that England had finally taken down its mask”.⁵ The English declaration of war against the Dutch Republic was drafted on 25 and 26 March, immediately following the attack on the Smyrna fleet. Charles II waited to declare war, however, until after the French declaration had reached the Dutch Republic on 7 April. This delay had a lot to do with the fact that Charles simultaneously published the Act of Indulgence,

¹ Roorda, *Het Rampjaar 1672*, 32.

² Cambier, *De jaren 1672 en 1673*, 15–26.

³ Haley, *William of Orange and the English Opposition 1672–4*, 32.

⁴ Cf. *Bondigh Verhael van 'tgeen voorgevallen is tusschen 's Lands Oorloghs Schepen, Smirnisvaerders* (1672), Van der Wulp 4713; *'t Samen-spraecck*, Knuttel 9975; *Veel Honden was de Haes sijn Doodt* (1672), Knuttel 9977; *Verhael van 't Zee-gevecht* (1672), Tiele 5811; *Verhael van de Zee-slaggh* (1672), Van der Wulp 4712; P. de Groot, *Edele Groot Mogende Heeren* (1672), Knuttel 9979; *Pertinent Rapport* (1672), Knuttel 9972; Mosterman, *Omstandigh verhael hoe 't zich toe-gedragen heeft met 's Landts Vloot* (1672), Knuttel 9973.

⁵ Japikse, *Brieven van Johan de Witt. Vierde Deel*, 303.



Fig 4. Rioters in Dordrecht ritually destroy a painting of Cornelis de Witt. Jan Luycken, *Oploop te Dordrecht*, Amsterdam Museum A 48517.

which gave extensive rights to Catholics in England. A war against the Dutch could perhaps distract attention from this remarkable initiative. As a consequence of these events, April saw the first massive peak in the number of popular political publications in 1672: fifty-one pamphlets were published, twice the normal monthly count.⁶

Works of Propaganda

The English – and to a lesser extent the French – war declarations were more than just justification of an upcoming attack; they were works of propaganda, although different in their level of sophistication. In terms of the Dutch market for popular political publications, the French propaganda effort was rather limited. Louis felt little obligation to win the hearts of the Dutch, although he did make some effort to scare them into submission and he explained to his own subjects his reasons for waging war

⁶ 50 pamphlets was a large enough number for Pieter Geyl to speak of a “pamphlet war”. See Geyl, “De Witten-oorlog, een pennestrijd in 1757.”

against the Dutch.⁷ As a consequence, his war declaration was rich in vagueness. From the French document, the Dutch could learn little more than that Louis felt insulted by the Dutch government and had decided to do something about it in a manner he knew well: with force.⁸ Louis's declaration did not express any grievances that could be resolved.⁹

The English war declaration was an entirely different matter. Charles had a lot to gain (and lose) in the Dutch Republic, since the English Crown was closely connected to the House of Orange. Knowing that William was not reluctant to arrange a coup with the help of his English uncle, Charles tried to meddle in the Dutch domestic political situation while attempting to convince his own subjects that his war was just.¹⁰ The English declaration was consequently a sophisticated and well-thought-out piece of propaganda. Henry Bennet, duke of Arlington (1618–1685) unveiled the English goal: "Our business is to break with them and yet to lay the breach at their door."¹¹ According to the declaration, the Dutch were to blame for the war. Charles complained, for example, that the Dutch had offended his honour because Dutch cities were filled with anti-English paintings, medals and columns. According to Charles, these works of propaganda were produced by the States General even at a time when the Dutch and English were bound by the Triple Alliance. Moreover, Charles referred to the raid on Chatham in 1667, which he called an attack on English commerce. With Chatham, Charles connected several Dutch regents (including Cornelis de Witt) directly to his reasons for going to war.¹² The English war declaration and especially the English "twaddle about Dutch propaganda" were meant for the public, not for diplomacy. Other points in the declaration, such as the East and West Indies and dominion over the seas, were similarly focused, intended to warm up the English public for war.¹³

The ideas in the English war declaration were reinforced by pamphlets using similar argumentation. Henry Stubbe (1632–1676) published

⁷ Roorda, *Het Rampjaar 1672*, 33–34. Cf. *Een Nacht-gesicht, waar in vertoont word Den Gepasten Koe* (1672), Van der Wulp 4879.

⁸ *Declaratie van den Koning van Vranckryk* (1672), Van der Wulp 4716, 1.

⁹ Israel, *De Republiek*, 877; Roorda, *Het Rampjaar 1672*, 34; Sonnino, *Louis XIV*, 192; Rowen, *John de Witt. Statesman of the 'True Freedom'*, 172.

¹⁰ Pincus, "From Butterboxes to Wooden Shoes." Cf. Jones, *The Anglo-Dutch Wars*, 179.

¹¹ Geyl, *Oranje en Stuart 1641–1672*, 271.

¹² Cf. *His Majesties Declaration against the States Generall of the United Provinces of the Low-Countreys* (1672), Knuttel 9984.

¹³ Valkenier, *'t Verwerde Europa*, 326; Jones, *The Anglo-Dutch Wars*, 180; Dreiskämper, *Redeloos, radeloos, reddeloos*, 36; Panhuysen, *De Ware Vrijheid*, 401; Roorda, *Het Rampjaar 1672*, 34; Geyl, *Oranje en Stuart 1641–1672*, 271.

A Justification of the Present War against the Netherlands, wherein the States General were again accused of publishing anti-English propaganda.¹⁴ Stubbe, who scornfully called the Dutch “the infant republic”, elaborated on the propaganda. He claimed that the States General had reacted to the English war declaration by saying that they had not produced the propaganda themselves. Because the offending propaganda had been the work of an individual, the States General argued that they could not be held accountable. Stubbe answered that the States General had published several pictures in the past and had refused to prohibit or prosecute these individual efforts. For authoritative effect, the pamphleteer quoted Justinian: “T’is the same thing to offend ones self, as it is not to prohibit the offences of others”. His point was that when a king is treated with this kind of contempt, he is not obliged to declare war before the actual attack. The attack on the Smyrna fleet and the coming English war were therefore just. Moreover, Stubbe argued that technically Charles had never been bound by the Triple Alliance because he had not signed the document personally.¹⁵

“Bloody Butchers”

Pamphleteers who supported the English war declaration stressed the wickedness of the Dutch. The author who wrote under the pseudonym William de Britaine mentioned in *The Dutch Usurpation* that the Hollanders were deviant, ungodly, lacking in virtue and concerned only with their own interest. “It’s an Apophthegm in their State that it’s for Kings and Merchants to keep their word and Faith: But for States, no longer then it’s subservient to their own Interest”.¹⁶ Referring to the peace treaty of Breda of 1667, he added, “every Article was broken by them. And no wonder, for it’s a Maxime of their State, that all Alliance to them is inconsiderable: the foundation of the Greatness and Safety, consists in their own Power and Strength. Therefore to keep an Article is of no consideration to them.”¹⁷ For the same reason, the prophet William Lilly called

¹⁴ H. Stubbe, *A Justification of the Present War against the United Netherlands* (1672), Knuttel 10017, 6. Stubbe, who published two pro-Charles, anti-True Freedom pamphlets in 1672, was commissioned by Joseph Williamson. Pincus, “From Butterboxes to Wooden Shoes,” 347.

¹⁵ Stubbe, *A Justification*, Knuttel 10017, 8, 40–43.

¹⁶ W. de Britaine, *The Dutch Usurpation* (1672), Knuttel 9951, 33. Cf. *Englands Interest* (1672), Knuttel 10004.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 27–28.

the Dutch regents “Hogan Mogans”, borrowing from Heeren Hoog Mogenden, the title that the Dutch regents had assumed themselves, and “Braggadacio’s”, in reference to their arrogance.¹⁸ A similar line of reasoning could be found in *The Dutch Usurpation*. The pamphleteer made it clear that the Dutch owed their freedom and wealth to English support during the Revolt and in the first half of the seventeenth century. And now all that the English received in return was ingratitude. “Insolent boggs”, wrote the author. “They might rather have said unto sedition, Thou are my father; and unto Rebellion, Thou are my mother.”¹⁹

Lastly, all these publications mentioned the massacre of Amboyna in 1623 for dramatic effect. According to William de Britaine, King James had told the ambassador of the States General that he never read or heard of a more cruel and impious act. “But I do forgive them (said the King) and I hope God will: But my Son’s Son will revenge the Blood, and punish this horrid Massacre.” Lilly referred to Amboyna as well, calling the Dutch “bloody butchers”.²⁰

When we look at what happened later in 1672, it is evident that the weight of the English war declaration and subsequent English propaganda lay in its presentation of the idea that the English were offended by the Dutch regents and their propaganda, such as the paintings that they had willingly produced. This idea inspired a group of citizens from Dordrecht, infuriated by the English war declaration, to raid their city hall on 13 May and ritually destroy a painting that lauded Cornelis de Witt at Chatham. The citizens took the painting down, ripped it to pieces and nailed the (painted) head of Cornelis de Witt to a scaffold.²¹ In general, English propaganda, of which the war declaration was an important part, reinforced the idea that the English would stop their war against the Dutch if the prince of Orange were restored to the offices that his ancestors had held. Also, several regents who had crossed England during the last ten years would have to be removed from office. Charles would call them the “Faction” in a later publication, a reference to “De Witt’s Cabal”, as the prince of Orange had named them in his letter to Charles in January.

¹⁸ W. Lilly, *The Dangerous Condition of the United Provinces Prognosticated* (1672), Knuttel 9952, 3–6.

¹⁹ Britaine, *The Dutch Usurpation*, Knuttel 9951, 13.

²⁰ Britaine, *The Dutch Usurpation*, Knuttel 9951, 14–15; Lilly, *The Dangerous Condition*, Knuttel 9952, 5. Cf. A. Milton, “Marketing a Massacre: Amboyna, the East India Company and the Public Sphere in Early Stuart England,” in *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England*, ed. P. Lake and S. Pincus (Manchester, 2007).

²¹ Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 677.

Henry Stubbe made it clear that the real problem was not the entire Dutch Republic, but the province of Holland, and more specifically, the opponents of the prince of Orange, or as he called them, the “pretended commonwealth”.²²

Dutch Reactions

Thirteen different Dutch pamphleteers reacted to the two war declarations and subsequent English propaganda.²³ These reactions were meant to accomplish two closely connected goals. Firstly, the arguments in English propaganda had to be refuted, not only to reinforce whatever international sympathy remained to the Dutch Republic, but also to prove that Dutch regents were not responsible for the coming war.²⁴ The magistrates had to take such action so that they could ask their citizens for money and to fight on the front lines during the war. As the delegates of the city of Haarlem declared during the meeting of the States of Holland on 24 December 1671, “They speak of giving money, but money alone cannot fight”.²⁵

The pamphlet *Consideratien over den Tegenwoordigen Toestant van het Vereenigde Nederland* was aimed at an international audience, mainly English, because the author thought there was room for a shift in English policy as a consequence of tensions between the English subjects and parliament, on one hand, and the English court, on the other. To exacerbate these tensions and refute the English war declaration, the pamphleteer claimed that “Charles wages this war to destroy the English parliaments”. England had betrayed the Triple Alliance and “in the history of the Republic there had never been such deceit”. Charles was described as a monarch who “must have a different Evangelicum than the one of tenderness and peace” because he had only one answer to problems: the cannon.²⁶

Similar feelings were expressed in the pamphlet *Trouloosheydt der Engelsche*. This pamphlet was meant to show that the English and French

²² Stubbe, *A Justification*, Knuttel 10017, 29.

²³ Two of these were commissioned by the States General: *Consideratien over den Tegenwoordigen Toestant van het Vereenigde Nederland* (1672), Knuttel 10008 and *Eenvoudig Burgerpraatje*, Knuttel 10014.

²⁴ Jacob Vinck, *Aanspraak aan alle Voorstanders der Vryheit van de verenigde Nederlanden* (1672), Knuttel 10027.

²⁵ Japikse, *Notulen*, 2.

²⁶ *Consideratien*, Knuttel 10008.

monarchs had wrongfully and unjustly attacked the Dutch Republic. The audience, which the rhetoric suggests was most probably international, was presented with an argument aimed against French tendencies towards universal monarchy and English jealousy of Dutch commerce. Moreover, the English king was accused of lying, because when he had left the Dutch Republic for England after the Restoration in 1660 he had said, "I truly love this province, so much even, that I would be jealous if any other prince would have a bigger part in their friendship than my part". After Charles had been installed as king, however, a non-stop sequence of events had led to tensions and wars.²⁷

The thirteen Dutch pamphleteers refuted Charles's complaints. Most important were the points on Dutch propaganda. One pamphleteer claimed that "the world should be afraid of a king who wants to go to war and shed blood over a painting",²⁸ The author of *Trouloosheydt der Engelsche* wrote that "it is known to all that since many centuries monuments have been constructed". He referred to the classics and to the Bible. In his own time, in 1651 the banners of victory had even been held in the face of the Spanish ambassador, who never complained. The author stressed that the painting of Chatham was not meant to mock Charles, but if it did, why had he not complained during the Treaty of Breda?²⁹ Finally, the *Consideratien* tried to alarm the international audience about the dire consequences of a defeat of the Dutch Republic. The author pointed out the benefits of Dutch freedom for Europe. "Our fatherland has so far been a refuge, an inn, for all exiles and all miserables." The author asked his audience where these people should go if the Dutch Republic were destroyed. His public ("all the world") was thus warned:

All the lands and peoples (except perhaps the Barbarians of Africa) should shiver and shudder, and look fearful at the devastation of her countries and cities from now on, because the rotten people of the world are as happy in their endeavours as they are evil in their intentions.³⁰

"The Word Burgher, That Bound All Hearts Together"

From the publications that followed the *Consideratien* and the *Trouloosheydt der Engelschen*, it becomes clear that Dutch regents were concerned about

²⁷ J.V.H., *Trouloosheydt der Engelsche* (1672), Knuttel 10019.

²⁸ *Consideratien*, Knuttel 10008, 22.

²⁹ J.V.H., *Trouloosheydt*, Knuttel 10019, 17–20.

³⁰ *Consideratien*, Knuttel 10008, 31–32.

a perennial problem with waging wars: they needed their citizens to fight and they needed money. They urged their citizens to pay their taxes, to participate in state loans and to expect new taxes in the near future. More importantly, however, regents changed their attitude towards citizens. Whereas most regents had been reluctant to address a non-governing public during the campaign to appoint William as army leader, now they asked the people for help: citizens needed to fight because the defence of the Republic could not be organised without them. Consequently, government moved towards cooperation with the governed instead of continuing the policy of coercion that had served them for so long. The Dutch government needed to prove that the war was unavoidable, that Dutch regents were not to blame for the war and that the Republic might be destroyed should not enough funds be raised.

The Eenvoudig Burgerpraatje, a pamphlet that was published shortly after the *Consideratien*, was openly dedicated to all Dutch citizens ("burghers") and had a different goal from that of the pamphlets that were aimed at an international audience. It was meant to gather support from Dutch citizens, who were urged to fight for the fatherland and "provide money". The *Eenvoudig Burgerpraatje* explained the arguments of the *Consideratien* for a domestic audience, to prove that England and France had declared war under false pretences. Furthermore, the *Eenvoudig Burgerpraatje* claimed that Dutch regents had done everything they could to prevent the war. In keeping with this line of thought, the pamphlet could accordingly claim that Dutch citizens had to obey the government and fight for the fatherland.³¹

The *Eenvoudig Burgerpraatje* was written as a dialogue between four people: one preacher and three citizens from Rotterdam, Leiden and Gouda. All agreed that the coming war would have a happy end because the cause was just. The preacher said, "as long as the burghers will do their job faithfully, as they are obliged to, with God's help we will persevere". The other characters agreed with him. The citizen from Gouda, for example, claimed that he would gladly fight for "the fatherland" and that refraining from fighting would "make us the most ungrateful people in the world".³²

The citizen's duty to fight was propagated in the *Eenvoudig Burgerpraatje* on two levels. First and foremost, citizens were painted an image based on fear: it was in their own interest to fight, for the armies of the enemy would

³¹ *Eenvoudig Burgerpraatje*, Knuttel 10014, 7.

³² *Ibid.*, 3–4.

not spare them. The citizen from Leiden explained that having saved up money his entire life to leave a considerable sum to his wife and children after his death, he had no intention of giving this up to foreign enemies. Additionally, besides stressing the citizens' personal interest in fighting, the Dutch government propagated the classical republican idea that the army could not survive without the help of citizens. The citizens in the dialogue agreed that hired armies could not be trusted and were too expensive for the Republic. Hired soldiers had nothing to lose, which was not a good incentive to risk their lives and fight. Citizens, by contrast, had everything to lose. The Rotterdammer feared that Dutchmen would be "kicked out of their own country as a bird out of its nest". The man from Leiden claimed that the mere sight of an army made up of Dutch citizens would scare the enemies away. According to the Rotterdammer, such an army would surely have God's support and Dutch freedom, which was a product of "the goods and blood of the ancestors", would prevail.³³

The pamphleteer also had to convince the audience that this war would end well for the Dutch. The preacher therefore referred to the French Fury of 17 January 1583, when François de Valois, duke of Anjou, besieged Antwerp and a group of citizens countered the attack and drove the French out. The pamphleteer's point was that "burghers" could be invincible, even against soldiers and even when their government lacked heart. During the siege, claimed the preacher, 1500 French soldiers had been killed, but only eighty Dutch had died.

The willingness to do good comes naturally, without guidance from government, the drums are heard, and incite even the fainthearted. Rich, poor, young and old come running with equal passion. Sea-beggar, Papist, Lutheran were forgotten names. The necessity healed the cracks by the force of the word burgher that bound all hearts together.

This pamphlet had to warm up citizens for battle, but for its plea to be successful, something more than a likely death needed to be projected. The pamphleteer painted a picture filled with glory wherein citizens fought for their personal interests and for the common good.³⁴

After the characters in the dialogue had been convinced that citizens should fight and that the battle would be won, the writer had to convince his audience that the Dutch regents were not responsible for the war. After discussing the international conflicts that had led to the war, the preacher

³³ Ibid., 5.

³⁴ Ibid., 10–15.

concluded that the “States had handled [matters] carefully and were not to blame”. The citizen from Leiden said, “I would like to wish the friends a good night and thank the preacher for his good education”. The reader was left without doubt; the preacher was the one with sound advice.³⁵

The idea that with the help of its citizens the Dutch Republic would survive the coming attack was repeated in several pamphlets. The poet Willem van Schuylenburgh wrote a publication with a motto that had been used during the revolt against Spain: ‘Si Deus nobiscum, quis contra nos’ [If God is with us, who shall be against us?]. His message to the “burghers” was “protect your cities with courage”.³⁶ The poet Jacob Vinck wrote that now was the time for citizens to offer themselves for “the fatherland”. According to these pamphleteers, it was better to die for the freedom that had been won with the blood of their forefathers than to live without this freedom.³⁷

Shifting the Middle Ground of Public Opinion

Had censorship in the Dutch Republic worked, had only these pamphlets been published and had the audience accepted all the views they promoted, the events that followed in 1672 might have turned out less dramatically. Censorship was, however, not effective and the attempt of the regents (and their sympathisers) to spur citizens into action provoked an unexpected reaction. Instead of writing of obeying government, paying taxes, working on the defence of their cities and preparing for battle, pamphleteers publicly started to question government propaganda and aimed their arrows at their own regents instead of the foreign aggressors. Pamphlets claimed that war was indeed unavoidable, but this was not necessarily the fault only of the foreign enemies. Dutch regents were for the first time depicted as possible traitors who had willingly put the Republic and its citizens in harm’s way. The writer of the pamphlet *Korte Verdenckinge omtrent ons Vaderlandt* stressed that the power of a state lay in its head. The head, he claimed, set the rest of the body in motion. So far, the body of the Republic had moved in a terrible way. The head therefore was corrupted. The writer avoided blaming the regents by name, but he was not at

³⁵ Ibid., 22–37.

³⁶ *Aenspraecck Tot het Gedreygde Nederlant* (1672), Knuttel 10026.

³⁷ Vinck, *Aanspraak aan alle Voorstanders der Vryheit van de verenigde Nederlanden*, Knuttel 10037.

all secretive about his feelings. He pointed an accusing finger at the men who had conjured the Perpetual Edict. The public knew them all too well: the secretary of the States General Gaspar Fagel (1634–1688), the diplomat from Gouda Hieronymus van Beverning (1614–1690), Johan de Witt and the Amsterdam regent Gilles Valckenier (1623–1680). Moreover, he mentioned “the man who took a trip to Brussels” (Cornelis de Witt), who had cost the Republic several thousands of guilders without diplomatic results to show in return. He concluded that these traitors should be “removed”.³⁸

As we have noted above, during the first months of 1672 Dutch government propaganda had stressed the need for citizens to part with their money and join the fight. This civic audience was told that it was in their own interest as well as the common interest to do so. The public was reminded of its “burgherschap” and the strength of this privilege. Their citizenship was presented as the only tie that bound. By expressing this message, regents encouraged citizens to participate in a public debate, if only as an audience. Although government propaganda had set these wheels in motion, events moved in an unforeseen direction. Personal interests and the common good, the catch phrases provided by propaganda to persuade the public to join the fight, were closely examined. Citizens concluded that regents had certainly made sure that their own personal interests had been taken care of; the common good, however, had been endangered by government policy. Dutch propaganda had not achieved its goal. Instead, it had invited into political debate a group that questioned whether their regents had produced good governance. The public debate concentrated on the merits of the Dutch regents. This would eventually lead to a debate about participation in politics and ultimately to the murder of Johan and Cornelis de Witt. This shift was partly a result of successful propaganda, not by government, but by oppositional writers. The volume of accusations against regents remained modest until the French army invaded the southern provinces in June 1672. With a foreign enemy on Dutch soil, the number of pamphlets exploded. Blaming regents quickly became widespread, undertaken not only by Orangist pamphleteers but also as part of the argumentation of many groups of citizens. Dutch citizens were convinced that certain regents had not only caused the war but had tried to sell the country to the French. In pamphlets published in late August and justifying the murders of Johan and Cornelis de Witt, we find “these traitors sold the country” and “they caused a war

³⁸ *Korte Overdenckinge*, Tiele 6545.

with England” repeated as common arguments. By that date, the middle ground had shifted so far that the popular political publications of the first months of the year would have seemed like relics from an ancient era. In the next chapters, we will see how pamphlets functioned as a political force with which to reckon. During the summer months debate was joined by action. The Year of Disaster had begun.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FIRST REVOLT

On 1 June 1672 Louis XIV crossed the Dutch borders with his army. He conquered an unprecedented number of cities within weeks. Still, most stories that came in from the front about the Dutch military undertakings during the first two weeks of June were positive. These stories ignored weeks of behind-the-scenes complaints about shortages of soldiers and weapons in the IJssellinie (the first defence line of the Dutch Republic). Also, they were not true. The soldiers from Arnhem, for example, were said to have killed “thousands of screaming Frenchmen” and the (true) story that Nijmegen had fallen was supposedly “thought up by a French reporter”.¹ Printer Symon de Putter from The Hague enthusiastically published a list with major French casualties.² Most news reports, however, concentrated on the campaign at sea, where the Dutch fleet had successfully fended off the French and English attacks at Solebay on 7 June, which allowed pamphleteers to publish a glorious account without bending the truth.³

The deficiencies in the defence of the Republic could not, however, be overlooked for long.⁴ The famous diplomat Hieronymus van Beverning, one of the delegated army officials from the States General who served as a link between The Hague and the front, wrote to Johan de Witt on 8 June, “The fear among the officers of the army is so great, that I become scared myself thinking about what to expect from them”.⁵ Two days later he

¹ *Post-Tyding van den 14 Juny 1672* (1672), Tiele 5889.

² *Lyste Van de Dooden en gequeste Heeren van qualiteyt* (1672), Knuttel 10036.

³ Michiel de Ruyter, *Copie, Van een Brief uyt 's Lands Vloot* (1672), Knuttel 10121; Cornelis de Witt, *Myn Heere* (1672), Knuttel 10122; *Rapport van Abraham de Swart, Schryver op 't Schip van den Schout by Nacht Van Nes* (1672), Knuttel 10126; *Extract van een Brief uyt 's Landts Vloot van den 8 Juny* (1672), Tiele 6041; *Gewisse Tydinge uyt 's Gravenhage*, Tiele 6042 (1672); *Waerachtigh verhael uyt 's Lants Vloot*, Tiele 6043 (1672); *Hage den 11 Juny*, Tiele 6052 (1672); *Verschede Brieven, geschreven uyt 's Lants Vloot*, Tiele 6049 (1672); *Vier Brieven*, Tiele 6048; *Kort begriip van de Tydinge*, Knuttel 10124 (1672); *Rotterdam den 9 Juny*, 1672, Tiele 6040 (1672); *Afbeelding*, Knuttel 10128; *A true Relation of the Engagement of his Majesties Fleet*, Knuttel 10119 (1672); *Genadige Declaratie van sijn Majesteyt van Groot Brittanien*, Knuttel 10130 (1672).

⁴ Cf. Wicquefort, “Mémoires,” 13.

⁵ Cambier, *De jaren 1672 en 1673*, 20.



Fig 5. The plundering of the house of Reijnier Langewagen in Hoorn. Feyken Rijp, *Chronijk van de vermaarde zee en koopstad Hoorn*, 1706, by H.L. Padtbrugge.

added that the terrible state of the army resulted in a “general despair among magistrates and people in these cities”.⁶

To fill the gaps in manpower, the military delegates had decided to send citizens and peasants from Holland to the eastern front. Although these men in some cases helped with the construction of defences, they were not soldiers, and they often went home without having made any substantial contribution to the safety of the Republic.⁷ Van Beverning labelled them “useless”.⁸ It was not long before citizens started to desert from the front. Once these men returned to their hometowns, however, they argued that they had performed an extraordinary duty for the fatherland and claimed rights and privileges in return.⁹

Moreover, contradictory information led to much confusion. On 28 June the States General gave the lord of Walenburg, who commanded

⁶ Japikse, *Brieven aan Johan de Witt*. Tweede Deel, 650–651.

⁷ Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 85–90.

⁸ Japikse, *Brieven aan Johan de Witt*. Tweede Deel, 652–653.

⁹ Japikse, *Notulen*, 120; Colenbrander, *Bescheiden uit vreemde archieven*. Tweede deel, 128.

Grave, the order to leave the city at once. Convinced of the great strategic importance of this city for the defence of the Republic, Walenburg refused and asked the prince of Orange to intervene. The States General repeated their order twice before they threatened to hang Walenburg for insubordination. By 2 July, the prince of Orange had not yet answered, so Walenburg took his army of 2400 men to Den Bosch, where he received a message from the prince of Orange not to leave Grave.¹⁰ More contradictory stories came in about attacks, sieges and losses in the eastern provinces. Most capitulations resulted in several stories with different versions, each blaming a different group for the surrender.

In all fairness, the French attack had caused such a high number of dramatic events in such a short period of time that trustworthy information was not to be expected. Louis XIV wanted to conquer the eastern strongholds as quickly as possible, after which the French army was supposed to halt on the southern borders of the Rhine.¹¹ Strategically important cities and strongholds such as Wesel, Nijmegen, Utrecht and the Ommerschans fell within days.¹² The armies of the bishops of Munster and Cologne in the meantime occupied the entire province of Overijssel and then marched north, where they began their disastrous siege of Groningen, which lasted from 19 July until 27 August and would cost Bernard van Galen half his army.¹³

In the meantime, the French soldiers had trampled the bulwark Knodsenburg and had laid siege to the famous and supposedly invincible Schenkenschans on 18 June. This stronghold, unreachable on two sides as it lay between two rivers, was packed with weapons and had plenty of soldiers. Nonetheless, the Schenkenschans surrendered only hours after the first enemy gunshots. The commander of the Schenkenschans, twenty-two-year-old Ten Haeff, was a son of one of the mayors of Nijmegen. He had no previous military experience and was largely responsible for the quick defeat. Ten Haeff would become a symbol of what had gone wrong in the eastern provinces. According to many pamphleteers, all officers had been “boys”.¹⁴ Soon it was claimed that commanders and regents of other cities had acted similarly, regardless of facts or evidence.

¹⁰ Cambier, *De jaren 1672 en 1673*, 30.

¹¹ Sonnino, *Louis XIV.*

¹² Cambier, *De jaren 1672 en 1673*, 19–20.

¹³ Cf. J.S. Theissen, ‘Voor Vrijheydt ende Vaderlandt’. *Stad en Lande in 1672* (Groningen/Den Haag, 1922).

¹⁴ *Ronde Waerheydt, In 't midden der Leugen* (1672), Knuttel 10222, 10. Cf. Aenspraeck, Van der Wulp 4886.

One pamphleteer wrote, "It is not a law of steel, to judge a man by his age, but experience and sad events have taught us that things can turn out wrong, when fighting with children instead of men".¹⁵ After the fall of the Schenkenschans, the French formed a large base camp at Zeist, where they expected a quick general surrender from the States General. Louis returned to France on 26 July, convinced that he had beaten the Dutch.¹⁶

During this period, when the French armies crossed the Rhine on 11 June at the so-called Tolhuis, stories about Dutch successes disappeared and publications filled with doom and despair dominated. Two Dutch regiments with 1,300 soldiers and under the command of Jean Barton de Montbas were supposed to prevent the French from crossing the Rhine, a natural line of defence protecting the entire provinces of Utrecht, Holland and Zeeland. Montbas and his troops fled as soon as they saw the French, letting the enemy cross the river unchecked.¹⁷ Montbas, who was related to Pieter de Groot – a detail that did not help De Groot's reputation when he was accused of treason a few months later – was captured, declared an enemy of the state and sentenced to death. Following Montbas's escape from prison on 28 July, the prince of Orange and the States General offered large rewards for his arrest.¹⁸ Montbas fled the country and joined the French army, from where he published a refutation in which he claimed that he was innocent and had been forced to flee for fear of popular violence.¹⁹

Pamphleteers had indeed turned Montbas into a mythical monster.²⁰ One author wrote that Montbas had not only let the French army pass, but had also pointed out where it could best cross the river.²¹ In a description of the death of nobleman Frederik van Nassau, lord of Zuylesteyn (1608–1672), who died in October during the siege of Woerden, Montbas

¹⁵ *Ronde Waerheydt*, Knuttel 10222, 10. Cf. *Deductie of Manifest van 't Garnisoen getrocken uit Schenkenschans* (1672), Tiele 5891; Cambier, *De jaren 1672 en 1673*, 21.

¹⁶ Cambier, *De jaren 1672 en 1673*, 30–35.

¹⁷ Cambier, *De jaren 1672 en 1673*, 25; Sypesteijn, *De verdediging van Nederland*, 116. Cf. Naeranus, *Naukeurige Bedenkingen*, Knuttel 10386; Wicquefort, "Mémoires," 85; *Wederlegginge*, Knuttel 10614.

¹⁸ Japikse, *Notulen*, 249; *Publicatie* (1672), Tiele 5935.

¹⁹ J.B. de Montbas, *Missiven, en Deductie* (1672), Knuttel 10506.

²⁰ J.A. Grothe, "Dagelijksche aantekeningen gedurende het verblijf der Franschen te Utrecht in 1672 en 1673, gehouden door Mr. Everhard Booth, Raad-Ordinaris in den Hove Provinciaal van Utrecht en Oud-Raad ter Admiraliteyt," *Berigten van het historische genootschap gevestigd te Utrecht* 6, no. 2 (1857), 3, 37.

²¹ *'t Hollandts Venezoen in Engelandt gebaken*, Wederleyt, Knuttel 10618. Cf. *Naukeurige Bedenkingen*, Knuttel 10386; *Wederlegginge*, Knuttel 10614; *T Ontdekte Vergift, gevonden in de Hollandse Venezoen* (1672), Knuttel 10616; Wicquefort, "Mémoires," 85.

appeared out of thin air to stab the already dead body of Zuylesteyn with his sword.²²

When the news of the French crossing of the Rhine became public, a quick and all-encompassing panic spread over the Dutch Republic and increased when it became clear that the Dutch army, including the prince of Orange, was hastily retreating towards Holland.²³ Petrus Valkenier (1641–1712), a lawyer from The Hague who in 1675 would write one of the most influential books about the Year of Disaster, *t Verwerde Europa*, claimed that the subsequent consternation “cannot be described with pens nor spoken with tongues.”²⁴ In the eastern provinces this panic led to a mass surrender of cities and a general flight of people and money to safe places. The cost of transportation rose spectacularly. Fleeing became the business of the rich.²⁵ On 17 June, Samuel Tucker wrote from Rotterdam, “The common people tumult, and will permitt noe goods to goe out, pretending the great ones send away their many and best things to Amsterdam, Zeeland and Hambourgh.”²⁶ The first fights broke out on the streets of several Dutch cities. The air was filled with fear of riots.

“Everything is Desperate”

The flight of goods and people strengthened the belief that regents had betrayed their cities, leaving the citizens at the mercy of the enemy. Citizens started to investigate all incoming and outgoing boats, carriages and people. In Haarlem, the Spaarne River was completely filled with boats. Not one ship could move backwards or forwards. This traffic jam on the water led to violence.²⁷

Politicians despaired equally. On 11 June, several representatives of the States General declared that the real problem in the defence of the country was not the lack of weapons or soldiers, but the “lack of courage”. During the same meeting, it was proposed that the meeting of the States of Holland be moved from The Hague to Amsterdam.²⁸ A representative

²² Grothe, “Dagelijksche aantekingen,” 3, 37.

²³ Den Tex, *Onder vreemde heren*, 7–9. Cf. Colenbrander, *Bescheiden uit vreemde archieven. Tweede deel*, 128.

²⁴ Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 460.

²⁵ Grothe, “Dagelijksche aantekingen,” 4–5.

²⁶ Colenbrander, *Bescheiden uit vreemde archieven. Tweede deel*, 129.

²⁷ Langedult, *Kort verhaal*, 12.

²⁸ Japikse, *Notulen*, 106; Colenbrander, *Bescheiden uit vreemde archieven. Tweede deel*, 132.

from the city of Gorinchem concluded, "Everything is desperate. Amsterdam will be eaten last. It is best to send ambassadors to England."²⁹ The diplomat Godard van Reede van Amerongen believed that the reports left only two options: "either government or the soldiers have lost their reputation".³⁰

After 11 June, pamphleteers stressed Dutch defeats rather than victories. One author published the last will of the States General.³¹ Another publicist wrote a lament for the fatherland, comparing Holland to a woman in labour.³² The motor behind these quick surrenders was increasingly believed to have been French money, or "golden Louisen" as it was called. The supposed widespread betrayal in the Dutch Republic led one pamphleteer to claim that the Dutch were no longer allowed to call themselves Batavians. He argued that the histories by Tacitus and Hooft should be erased because these heroic stories no longer applied.³³ Language in pamphlets was laced with blood. The poet Hans van Bulderen rhymed, "The sword of war has been drawn, where once the cattle ate the sweet clover, now people bleed all over".³⁴ The treacherous captains in Woerden were, according to a pamphleteer, no good except for "climbing the scaffold".³⁵ After the French had conquered the entire province of Utrecht, stories about anti-Protestant violence, rapes, murders and the most horrific tortures appeared on a regular basis.³⁶

Pamphlets changed in both nature and volume during the first weeks of the attack on the Dutch Republic. The fifty-one pamphlets published in April had already been nearly double the normal amount. In June 120 pamphlets appeared. In July, that number rose to an unprecedented 178. By that time, the language of indignation in pamphlets had been replaced by words of hatred.

Whom to Blame?

The commanders of the armies were to blame. The majority of pamphlets that commented on the fall of cities in the east agreed on that much.

²⁹ Japikse, *Notulen*, 110.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 165–168.

³¹ *Letzter Wille der Verrathenen Vereingten Staaten* (1672), Knuttel 10248.

³² I.I.V.P., *Hollandt Hollende naar 't Verderf* (1672), Knuttel 10280.

³³ *Klachte Over den Voorspoet der Land Verraderye* (1672), Petit 3786.

³⁴ Van Bulderen, *De Werelt*, Tiele 6148.

³⁵ *Aen alle Lafhartige Capiteyns in 't Leger van Woerden* (1672), Knuttel 10632, 4.

³⁶ *Missive, uyt Uytrecht Ende Aernhem*, Knuttel 10078.

In some cases, these accusations were accurate. Captain Daniel d'Ossery was sentenced to death by the military court for betrayal in Rijnberk.³⁷ D'Ossery had given a tour of the defences in Rijnberk to a family member who was a herald in the French army.³⁸ At the beginning of August, Captain Alexander de Injosta was beheaded for betrayal during the siege of Wesel.³⁹ Often the course of events was disputed. Some citizens from Zwolle claimed in a pamphlet that they had wanted to defend Zwolle with their "goods and blood", but had been prevented from doing so by the treacherous regents. Yet it was reported that only one in five citizens had taken an oath promising to defend Zwolle, insinuating that plans had been made by the citizens, not the regents, to surrender the city.⁴⁰ One pamphlet recorded that a mayor had come to inspect the city's defences and had asked the soldiers to fire their cannon at the enemy. According to the pamphleteer, "the Munsterse fell over as if the cannonball was a scythe", but the mayor gave the soldiers money and forbade them to fire their cannons until they were ordered to. "But that devilish traitor did not look at us anymore, nor did he give orders to fire the canon." The pamphleteer added that the mayor surrendered to the enemy without the knowledge or consent of the soldiers or citizens, who had been ready to fight.⁴¹

By the end of June there was no doubt in these accounts: the surrenders had been caused by betrayal. They differed only on the person or group to be blamed. After 12 June, pamphleteers had started to point fingers in many directions: commanders, regents, officers, soldiers, magistrates, citizens and "Hollanders" were all blamed for the Republic's predicament. General Paulus Wirtz claimed on 20 July that the regents were "slow, and take care of their own interests and therefore display negligence in defending the state".⁴² Now the pamphleteers reflected on how a state heading for extinction could be saved. Many Dutchmen turned to God. The States of Holland published sermons that were to be preached during the

³⁷ *Den Gouverneur van Rhynderck, onthoofd* (1672), Van der Wulp 4774; Pots, *Waerschouwinge*, Knuttel 10058, L. de Sille and F. de Nassau, *Sententie By den Chrijghs-Rade gegeven Tegens Daniel Baron d'Ossery* (1672), Knuttel 10087; Japikse, *Notulen*, 119. Cf. *Waerachtich Verhael van eenige der voornaemste saecken* (1672), Knuttel 10091.

³⁸ Sille, *Sententie*, Knuttel 10087.

³⁹ *Alexander de Injosta Onthoofd* (1672), Tiele 5940; *Sententie By den Kryghs-Rade gegeven Over Alexander D'Hinyossa* (1672), Knuttel 10077; *Waerachtige Missive uyt Schoonhoven* (1672), Tiele 5941.

⁴⁰ J. Vriesen, *Copia Van een Missive geschreven aen haer Hoogh Mogentheden de Heeren Staten Generael* (1672), Knuttel 10093; Japikse, *Notulen*, 122.

⁴¹ *Brief uyt 's Gravenhage* (1672), Knuttel 10281, 11–12.

⁴² Japikse, *Notulen*, 221.

centrally organised weekly and monthly prayer days to save the state.⁴³ Many pamphleteers claimed that to chastise the state, God had removed reason from the regents.⁴⁴ What then had caused God's anger? According to Levijn van Dijk, the producer-printer-writer from The Hague, the sins of the Dutch people had caused "God's dismay". Van Dijk stressed the contrast between his own generation, on one hand, and the generation of Dutchmen who had fought during the revolt and those who had struggled in the name of the True Reformed Religion for eighty years, on the other.⁴⁵

Besides trying to save the state by prayer, pamphleteers assessed the military situation and concluded that restrictions on the prince of Orange had kept him from solving the problems in the army. One pamphleteer described how the situation had "awakened the conscience of the Dutch citizens", who wanted a more influential role for the prince of Orange.⁴⁶ This idea was expressed not only in pamphlets but also in governing bodies. On 20 June, the delegated members from Leiden proposed in a meeting of the States of Holland that the Republic should rely more on the prince of Orange "because an army cannot be ruled by many heads".⁴⁷ Arguing along these lines, the idea that the prince of Orange could never be appointed to the office of stadholder was rejected. In these "terrible times", claimed pamphlets and politicians alike, the Republic needed a strong leader, and the prince of Orange was the only suitable candidate. For the first time in five years, Orangist pamphleteers could argue again in favour of the stadholderate and expect their case to bear fruit.

The foundation of the True Freedom was showing serious cracks. Public opinion abandoned the accepted norms of the 1650s and 1660s. On 19 June, in a sign of the anger against the "traitors in government", the first stone was thrown through the window of a regent's house in the province of Holland. One day later, Johan de Witt pleaded in the States of Holland that something be done about the great "confusion" in the state. "If the regents do not show resolve we will shoot ourselves in the foot", argued De Witt.⁴⁸ "At the moment, we suffer more by the hands of our own people

⁴³ *Twee Christelijcke Gebeden* (1672), Van der Wulp 4893; *Tweede Gebedt tot Godt, Om hulp teegens de geweldige Krijghsmachten der Koningen van Vrackrijck en Engellant* (1672), Knuttel 10243.

⁴⁴ *Brief uyt 's Gravenhage*, Knuttel 10281, 3; *De Heldere Dageraad*, Knuttel 10311, 6; *Den Grooten en Witten Duyvel*, Knuttel 10317, 10. Cf. Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 107.

⁴⁵ Van Dyck, *Een ootmoedige smeeckinge*, Knuttel 10025, 4. Cf. I.I.V.P., *Hollandt Hollende*, Knuttel 10280.

⁴⁶ *Deductie*, Knuttel 10380.

⁴⁷ Japikse, *Notulen*, 117–118.

⁴⁸ Japikse, *Notulen*, 115.

than by the enemy and if we do not restore order, the situation will become hopeless and without remedy.”⁴⁹ That same day, Johan de Witt claimed in a letter to his brother that the state had fallen into “complete revolt”. “Things get, God forbid, worse here every day. The most important evil which weighs us down is a general wildness and disobedience of all inhabitants in the cities and in the country.”⁵⁰ The next day, the first regents became victims of popular violence. Unsurprisingly, one of these regents was Johan de Witt himself.

Attempting Murder

On the evening of 21 June, four men debated politics over dinner. They were near the Binnenhof in The Hague, at the house of Jacob de Graaf, sr., a counsel in the Court of Holland. The four men were the brothers Jacob and Pieter de Graaf and their two friends Adolph Borrebach and Cornelis de Bruyn. The foursome left the house at half past ten, still discussing politics. They agreed that Johan de Witt had been responsible for the near defeat of the Dutch Republic, calling him a “traitor of the state”. When they passed the Binnenhof, they saw that the light was still on in the rooms where the States of Holland met.⁵¹ The men decided to attack the grand pensionary and drew straws to decide who was to strike the first blow. Cornelis de Bruyn pulled the shortest straw.

De Bruyn attacked De Witt when he came out of his office with his servant, who was carrying a torch. Borrebach held down the servant. According to De Witt, who wrote a letter about the event to the States of Holland, the four men attacked him without saying a word. They stabbed him several times in his shoulder and between the fourth and fifth ribs.⁵² After the attack, the men fled to the house of the printer Levijn van Dijk.⁵³ A rumour immediately spread in The Hague that Johan de Witt had been killed.⁵⁴ Only Jacob van der Graaf was eventually arrested, accused of *Crimen Laese Majestatis* and sentenced to death by the sword. He was beheaded on 29 June.⁵⁵ The other attackers successfully fled to the army

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Japikse, *Brieven van Johan de Witt. Vierde Deel*, 386–387.

⁵¹ A. Pots, *Sententie, Van den Hove van Hollandt, jegens Iacob vander Graeff* (1672), Knuttel 10136.

⁵² J. de Witt, *Missive van de Heer Raadt Pensionaris de Wit* (1672), Tiele 6056.

⁵³ Pots, *Sententie*, Knuttel 10136.

⁵⁴ *Waerlijck verhael* (1672), Knuttel 10463, 5.

⁵⁵ Pots, *Sententie*, Knuttel 10136. Cf. Baxter, *William III*, 76.

of the prince of Orange in Bodegraven, from where they escaped to unknown destinations. Later the prince would reward them: De Bruijn received a place on the city council in The Hague and the office of post-master that Borrebach's father held was made hereditary.⁵⁶

The first attack on Johan de Witt incited the publication of a pamphlet with arguably the highest number of editions in Dutch early modern history, the *Worsteling Jacob*s.⁵⁷ Thirteen editions of this pamphlet appeared in 1672 and it continued to be reprinted. According to several sources, it was still sold in new editions in Amsterdam during the nineteenth century.⁵⁸ The *Worsteling Jacob*s was most probably paid for by the prince of Orange. The evidence is, however, inconclusive: the author, Simon Simonides (1629–1676), a preacher from The Hague, was paid 200 guilders a year by the prince of Orange, but it is not clear whether this payment started before or after 1672. We can, however, be sure that the prince of Orange supported its argument, if only in hindsight.⁵⁹

Nine thousand copies of *Worsteling Jacob*s were sold “within days” in the province of Holland alone.⁶⁰ It was so successful in its goal of turning Jacob van der Graaf into a martyr that during his execution, the regents feared riots. On the day of the execution the bridges were pulled up, cavalry was present and the city militia was called to arms in The Hague, Delft, Rotterdam and Leiden.⁶¹

The moral of Simonides's story was that a man who had once walked the path of the wicked could return to the right side of God after remorse and struggle with his conscience.⁶² In his pamphlet, Simonides described the days between the arrest of Jacob van der Graaf on 21 June and his beheading on 29 June. The story was meant to cultivate sympathy among the audience. Not so subtly, Simonides let Van der Graaf cry out, “Why have you forsaken me?”, comparing the attacker of Johan de Witt with Christ. After Van der Graaf realised that he had lived his life wrongly, he asked God for help. Simonides mixed fiction with fact, describing a visit by several preachers to Van der Graaf in his cell. According to these preachers

⁵⁶ J.E. Haijer, “De moord op de gebroeders De Witt,” *Spiegel Historiae* 7, no. 8 (1967): 418.

⁵⁷ S. Simonides, *De Worsteling Jacobs* (1672), Knuttel 10455.

⁵⁸ New editions appeared with certainty in 1699, 1728, 1751 and 1793, but since Dutch pamphlet collections are still mostly unexplored territory, more editions are bound to be found. Hartong, “‘De Worsteling Jacob’ als pamflet”.

⁵⁹ Japikse, *Prins Willem III. De stadhouder-koning*, 214.

⁶⁰ Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 675.

⁶¹ *Waerlijck verhael*, Knuttel 10463, 7.

⁶² Simonides, *De Worsteling Jacobs*, Knuttel 10455, 2.

(was Simonides one of them?) Van der Graaf was sad only for the sake of his parents, not for his own fate. On the contrary, he expressed some pleasure at the prospect of death. The writer played on the emotions of his audience by describing how people who met Van der Graaf during these days felt sorry for him. The warden, for example, did not dare to tell him the date of his execution, out of sympathy, but after he had reassured the warden that he had embraced his fate, the two men sang Psalm 42 together "from beginning until the end".⁶³

Twenty-two-year-old Jacob van der Graaf was beheaded on 29 June. It was said that he walked to the executioner's block with a smile on his face.⁶⁴ The execution was surrounded by mystery. When executioner Christiaan Corstiaansz looked at his sword before carrying out the sentence, his vision darkened, "as if there hung a cloud above his head".⁶⁵ After he struck the first blow, his sword bent. He had to strike a second and a third time before the head rolled into the basket.⁶⁶ Moreover, after the beheading, the executioner could not remove Van der Graaf's blood from the sword, even after attempts with water, chalk and oil.⁶⁷ Consequently, he swore to quit the business and promised that his son would not succeed him.⁶⁸ The story ended in the only possible way: Van der Graaf gained the status of a martyr. During the execution, "many saw a light, or halo, appear above Jacob's head".⁶⁹

The *Worstelinge Jacobs* had dramatic consequences. Most importantly, it proved to be a propagandist bullet in the Orangist pistol aimed at Johan de Witt. Contemporaries even claimed that this pamphlet inspired the murder of Johan and Cornelis de Witt several weeks later.⁷⁰ The wound between Johan de Witt's fourth and fifth ribs and the wound in his shoulder supposedly began to bleed spontaneously when he was hung upside down and ripped apart on 20 August.⁷¹ Although he was not present that day, Jacob van der Graaf turned out to be one of Johan de Witt's killers nonetheless.

⁶³ Ibid., 3–7.

⁶⁴ *Waerlijck verhael*, Knuttel 10463, 7.

⁶⁵ Simonides, *De Worstelinge Jacobs*, Knuttel 10455, 13–14.

⁶⁶ Gebhard, "Een dagboek uit het rampjaar 1672," 55.

⁶⁷ Simonides, *De Worstelinge Jacobs*, Knuttel 10455, 14.

⁶⁸ *Gedenkwaardige Stukken wegens Den moordt der Heeren Cornelis en Johan de Witt* (1692), Van der Wulp 4956.

⁶⁹ Simonides, *De Worstelinge Jacobs*, Knuttel 10455, 14; *Waerlijck verhael*, Knuttel 10463, 10.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 16.

⁷¹ *Groeningse Rommelpot* (1672), Petit 3869; *Waerlijck verhael*, Knuttel 10463.

A 'Bizarre Political Process'

During the last days of June, the regents of the four remaining provinces of the Dutch Republic were engaged in a diplomatic fiasco that would prove to be just as damaging to regents as a group as the capitulation of the three provinces had been and contributed in like measure to their image as traitors of the fatherland.

After the IJssellinie had collapsed, the dangerous word "negotiation" was repeatedly uttered in political meetings. The prince of Orange had retreated with his army from the eastern front to Utrecht, where he arrived on 15 June. After a confusing meeting with the local magistrates, William moved his army towards Holland on 18 June.⁷² Five days later, the French had conquered Utrecht. In the meantime, the remaining parts of the Dutch army had retreated behind the Hollandse Waterlinie, the last line of defence, which was made up of five strongholds surrounding the provinces of Holland and Zeeland.⁷³

During the meeting of the States of Holland on 13 June, the cities of Leiden and Gorinchem had already proposed sending an ambassador to England to investigate diplomatic possibilities.⁷⁴ The next day, delegates from Leiden suggested going a step further and proposed peace negotiations with France as a way out of the predicament.⁷⁵ On 15 June, the States General decided to ask England and France under what conditions they would be willing to agree to a peace.⁷⁶ Johan Boreel reported from London that Charles II first wanted to consult Louis XIV about possible demands. Charles subsequently sent Henry Bennet, duke of Arlington, and George Villiers, duke of Buckingham, to the Dutch Republic.⁷⁷ In the meantime, the States General had sent Johan van Ghent, Willem Adriaen Odijk and Pieter de Groot to enquire about the French demands. These negotiations would almost cost De Groot his life later in 1672. A notoriously unattractive man with a pockmarked face and a limp, De Groot was a lawyer, as might be expected from the son of Hugo de Groot, the greatest professor of law the Dutch had ever known. In 1638 Pieter de Groot had become a counsel for the Court of Holland and he subsequently filled several

⁷² Fruin, *De oorlog van 1672*, 114–119.

⁷³ Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 98, Den Tex, *Onder vreemde heren*, 7–9.

⁷⁴ Japikse, *Notulen*, 110, 24. Geyl, *Oranje en Stuart 1641–1672*, 288.

⁷⁵ Valkenier, *'t Verwerde Europa*, 638.

⁷⁶ Geyl, *Oranje en Stuart 1641–1672*, 288.

⁷⁷ Fruin, *De oorlog van 1672*, 157.

political offices. At the time he went to negotiate with the French, he was pensionary of Rotterdam.⁷⁸

On 23 June, De Groot and his fellow negotiators learned from the French ambassadors Louvois and Pomponne that Louis XIV considered all the towns that he had conquered his property and that he wanted financial compensation for his war efforts and compensation for his allies.⁷⁹ Zeeland had objected to these peace talks in the States General on 21 June. When De Groot appeared in the meeting of the States of Holland on 25 June to report about the French demands, Dordrecht, Haarlem, Delft and Leiden voted in favour of continuing the peace talks. Leiden even wanted to give the negotiators “absolut pouvoir”, which meant that the Dutch ambassadors could agree to anything they regarded as beneficial at that moment. The delegates from Amsterdam disagreed and stated that they were not qualified to decide on such an important subject without consultation. Alkmaar added, “they preferred to be slaughtered by the enemy than to be beaten to death by the hands of their own citizens”.⁸⁰ After the meeting, the delegates of several cities, including Amsterdam, returned home for consultation and would not return to The Hague for several days. In their absence, the States of Holland held two more meetings, one that night and another the next day. Rotterdam would later claim that the absence of Amsterdam was seen during these meetings as “consent”.⁸¹ On 27 June, the remaining cities decided to draft an instruction for a peace proposal that De Groot could take to the States General.⁸²

During this meeting, the most bizarre political process of the decade took place. A crucial decision about the future of the entire Dutch Republic was taken without the votes of Gelderland, Utrecht and Overijssel, the provinces that had been conquered by the enemy, and without Groningen, which had not sent delegates, while Zeeland and Friesland came without an agreement on how to vote. The only province that claimed that it could decide on anything was Holland, which as we have seen, had come without any form of unanimity. The delegates from Holland had even come

⁷⁸ Zijlmans, *Vriendenkringen*, 168; J. Melles, *Ministers aan de Maas. Geschiedenis van de Rotterdamse pensionarissen met een inleiding over het stedelijk penionariaat 1508–1795* (Rotterdam/s Gravenhage, 1960), 114–128.

⁷⁹ Fruin, *De oorlog van 1672*, 158–159; Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 111; Rowen, “Arnauld de Pomponne,” 542.

⁸⁰ Japikse, *Notulen*, 130–139; Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 111–114. Cf. Polvliet, *Amsterdam in 1672 in verband met onze tegenwoordige weerbaarheid*, 12–14.

⁸¹ Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 115.

⁸² Geyl, *Oranje en Stuart 1641–1672*, 291; Japikse, *Notulen*, 134, 143–149.

against the will of Amsterdam, which held the most important vote of all. When during this meeting the decision was taken to start negotiations with the enemy, the president, who came from Friesland, refused to approve this conclusion. The stand-in president from Zeeland and the stand-in for the stand-in from Utrecht refused to approve as well. Gaspar Fagel, the *griffier* of the States General, also withheld his signature. Eventually, Frederik van Dorp, lord of Maasdam, a member of the nobility from the province of Holland, signed the resolution. The lawfulness of the procedure was doubtful to say the least. Nonetheless, De Groot was sent back to the French ambassadors immediately, to start negotiations.⁸³

On 1 July, De Groot returned to report about his first talks with the French, bringing with him a list of French demands. As noted, Louis XIV demanded to keep the lands that he had conquered and required financial compensation for himself and his allies. Moreover, he wanted the States General to thank him once a year for allowing the Dutch to keep a part of their country.⁸⁴

On the same day that Louis XIV presented his demands, Charles II also came up with a list. The English king wanted parts of Zeeland, structured payments for fishing in the North Sea, several trading privileges in the colonies and financial compensation for the money that had been spent on this war. Moreover, Charles explicitly asked for a satisfying settlement for his nephew the prince of Orange.⁸⁵

"Fight until the Last Drop of Blood"

News about the negotiations spread quickly, and now, with these outrageous demands, objections came from all directions. Justus de Huybert, the pensionary of the province of Zeeland, wrote a letter to the States General arguing that the Dutch "freedom, government, and religion" could under no circumstances be negotiable.⁸⁶ The letter was published in several editions within days and became the leading voice of the opposition.

⁸³ Geyl, *Oranje en Stuart 1641–1672*, 291; Japikse, *Notulen*, 136–139.

⁸⁴ Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 653; Fruin, *De oorlog van 1672*, 162–163; Geyl, *Oranje en Stuart 1641–1672*, 292. Cf. Colenbrander, *Bescheiden uit vreemde archieven. Tweede deel*, 142–143.

⁸⁵ Colenbrander, *Bescheiden uit vreemde archieven, Tweede Deel*, 142–143.

⁸⁶ J. de Huybert, *Copie Ed.Gr. Mo. Heeren, bysondre goede Vrienden, Nabuyren en Bontgenooten* (1672), Knuttel 10133. Cf. Japikse, *Notulen*, 136; Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 656.

Likewise, Amsterdam declared that all negotiations with the enemy should be ended immediately and that they were willing to keep fighting until the last drop of blood, rather than accept such demands.⁸⁷ The Amsterdammer Cornelis Hop mockingly called the other delegates “merchants of sovereignty and freedom”.⁸⁸ Gaspar Fagel said that he “preferred to die ten times before becoming a slave to France”.⁸⁹

Since the several provincial political bodies and the States General had not officially shared any information with the Dutch public, pamphleteers who were not in the loop published the most outrageous stories. They claimed, for example, that the delegates sent to England had not been given permission to negotiate a peace, allegedly in order to “blind the citizenry”.⁹⁰ According to one pamphleteer, Johan de Witt had wanted to sell the country to France, for which he had used Pieter de Groot as a “broker”.⁹¹

During and after negotiations with the French and English invaders three closely related developments took place: large-scale riots broke out in the provinces of Zeeland and Holland between 25 June and 4 July; the cry to appoint the prince of Orange to the office of stadholder became louder; and citizens demanded to know what their regents had proposed or agreed to during meetings of the provincial states. During the meeting of the States of Holland of 28 June, the nobility suggested that “it would be better to inform the citizenry of what was going on”.⁹² In short: the regents of Holland and Zeeland started to fend off possible riots by sharing diplomatic information with the governed. This happened in Hoorn on 30 June, in Enkhuizen on 1 July, and in Purmerend and Monnickendam on 2 and 3 July. In Zierikzee the captains of the city militia demanded to review all official correspondence. Purmerend explained during the next meeting of the States of Holland that its citizens had threatened to kill their magistrates if they continued with the negotiations.⁹³ The city council in Amsterdam supposedly began to see “the general necessity to inform the citizenry about the plans of government”.⁹⁴

⁸⁷ Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 644; Japikse, *Notulen*, 172.

⁸⁸ Geyl, *Oranje en Stuart 1641–1672*, 292.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 295.

⁹⁰ *Extract Notarieel. Uyt seeckere Missive van een Raetsheer des Koninks van Engelandt* (1672), Knuttel 10059; *Lanterluy-Spel, voor den Jare 1672* (1672), Tiele 6195; *Lettre au sieur Vanbeuning* (1672), Knuttel 10392. Cf. *Een Voorslach* (1672), Knuttel 10051.

⁹¹ *De Heldere Dageraad*, Knuttel 10311, 3.

⁹² Japikse, *Notulen*, 152.

⁹³ Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 111–118. Cf. Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 451.

⁹⁴ Gebhard, “Amsterdamsche aantekeningen uit 1672,” 155.

Instead of being able gradually to allow the governed a share in the political-decision-making process, Dutch regents had to prove that they had not been part of the group that had suggested capitulating. For the regents from Holland this plan came too late. Although the States of Holland took a new oath promising to give “goods and blood” for the defence of the province and decided to publish these new signs of loyalty, political power no longer lay in the hands of those who were supposed to govern.⁹⁵ On 25 June, the citizens of Dordrecht started a riot that would set a wave of violence in motion.

“Gentlemen, I Pity You”

“Each stood as if intoxicated and dumb; the inside of their houses was too small and scary, so they went out on the street, where they met with no other comfort, than crying and misery”.⁹⁶ These words from Petrus Valkenier were accurate for most cities in Holland and Zeeland at the end of June.

To be sure, there had been sporadic violence ever since the French had entered the Dutch Republic at the beginning of June, but by 18 June the violence had become so widespread that the members of the States of Holland discussed the problem for the first time during their meeting.⁹⁷ The riots had changed in character, becoming more closely intertwined in form and timing. Within a week, between 25 June and 4 July, citizens in the majority of cities in Holland and Zeeland stood up against their own government. The parts of the Republic that had not been torched by enemy armies were set alight by this internal fire, and instead of stopping the riots, the city militia had become the driving force behind these large movements. The rioters in different cities had similar grievances, which they presented in printed petitions. They also had a common solution to the problem: appoint the prince of Orange to the office of stadholder and make government accountable for carrying out its duties.

Contemporaries saw the riots between 25 June and 4 July as one cohesive movement. Petrus Valkenier compared them to the iconoclasm of the sixteenth century. “Everyone started to express his sentiment publicly, thinking with Emperor Tiberius, that people in free republics should also

⁹⁵ Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 657–658.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 636.

⁹⁷ The very first riot in 1672 had broken out in Utrecht, on 9 June. Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 459, 620.

have free tongues", wrote Valkenier.⁹⁸ He claimed that the citizens "stood up" to ensure protection, ascribing a search for good government as the motivation for these riots. Valkenier did not describe the riotous movement as a bad thing. On the contrary, he called the rioters "good patriots" and claimed that they were a fire that had smouldered for a long time and only now erupted.⁹⁹ On 27 June, Samuel Tucker wrote to Williamson from Rotterdam attributing the mass riots to the fact that "the people will beare it noe longer".¹⁰⁰

One obvious explanation for why these riots have been seen as a single movement is the fact that they broke out in different places within such a short period of time. Haarlem followed Dordrecht within a day. Some hours after the riots in Haarlem had broken out, citizens in Rotterdam revolted. We can understand this connection better if we look at news and political publications that accompanied the riots and spread within hours throughout the Republic. One of the first reports of the riot in Rotterdam added the resolution that had been taken in Dordrecht a day before, referring to the correlation of the two events and giving an example to the rest of the Dutch citizens.¹⁰¹ On 27 June, different pamphlets about the first revolts in Dordrecht, Haarlem and Rotterdam appeared, showing people in other cities what was possible.¹⁰² To establish the connections between publications and riots we will have to look at the pamphlets in more detail, and it will become clear that Craig Harline was possibly wrong when, famously, he wrote, "people did not read pamphlets and then run out and riot".¹⁰³

Dordrecht: The First Domino

The first wave of revolts started in Dordrecht, where a rumour about an empty armoury led outraged masses to take to the streets.¹⁰⁴ People called for more influence for the prince of Orange and the destruction of the Perpetual Edict. Moreover, citizens demanded that seven regents who had

⁹⁸ Valkenier, *'t Verwerde Europa*, 664.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 676.

¹⁰⁰ Colenbrander, *Bescheiden uit vreemde archieven. Tweede deel*, 130–131.

¹⁰¹ *Missive uyt Rotterdam* (1672), Tiele 6063.

¹⁰² *Uyt Rotterdam, den 26 Junii* (1672), Van der Wulp 4792.

¹⁰³ Harline, *Pamphlets*, 107.

¹⁰⁴ *Copie, Rakende het Verkiesen Van den Wel-Edelen Hoogh-Geboren Vorst, Wilhem Hendrick* (1672), Knuttel 10138; Japikse, *Notulen*, 161; Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 121, Valkenier, *'t Verwerde Europa*, 677–678.

opposed the prince of Orange during recent debates be removed from office.¹⁰⁵ These regents were taken from their houses and brought to the city hall in order to ensure the demands were met. Regent Johan Halling had to enter the city hall through the back entrance because in front of the building stood a man with an axe who had promised the crowd that he was going to split Halling's head in two.¹⁰⁶

The next day several citizens and regents formed a committee that went to collect the prince of Orange so that he could officially be declared stadholder of Dordrecht. This procedure, whereby a committee of regents and citizens was formed, would become a blueprint for subsequent popular movements in other cities.¹⁰⁷ The committee left Dordrecht under the watchful eyes of thousands of citizens yelling, "Long live the Prince. Die, the evil government must die" and "the devil get the De Witts and all their adherents". The citizens hung Orange flags from towers with the words, "Orange above, white under, who thinks differently, hit him with thunder".¹⁰⁸

On 26 June, the prince of Orange entered Dordrecht accompanied by a loud chorus of voices yelling, "Viva Orange". When the prince prepared to leave again, a group of citizens discovered that he had not been made stadholder at the city hall. William's carriage was halted, and the outraged citizens threatened to kill all regents unless the prince was made stadholder instantly. Scared to death, the regents and the prince went to an inn called The Peacock where the Perpetual Edict was destroyed and William was quickly declared stadholder. William supposedly told the regents of Dordrecht, "Gentlemen, I pity you".¹⁰⁹

The news about the destruction of the Perpetual Edict and the appointment of the prince of Orange was read out publicly at the city hall and in the streets where the city militia had gathered in large numbers. The Perpetual Edict itself was publicly burned.¹¹⁰ On 29 June, the city council of Dordrecht felt obliged to publish a statement about the appointment of William to the office of stadholder. The news was short, sober and without comment. A reader could feel the gun to the neck of the regents.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ *Extraordinaire Missive uyt 's Graven-Hage, vanden 18 July* (1672), Tiele 6082.

¹⁰⁶ *Den Val*, Knuttel 10414, 3.

¹⁰⁷ Schilling, "Civic republicanism," 15–16.

¹⁰⁸ Valkenier, 't *Verwerde Europa*, 677–679.

¹⁰⁹ Japikse, *Notulen*, 161. Cf. Valkenier, 't *Verwerde Europa*, 679.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 121.

¹¹¹ *Copie*, Knuttel 10138. Cf. *Brief uyt Dordrecht van den 29 Junij* (1672), Tiele 6060; *Copie van een Brief uyt Dordrecht* (1672), Tiele 6061.

According to an anonymous account of these events, the riots had stopped as soon as the prince of Orange had been made stadholder.¹¹²

One regent from Dordrecht had missed all these events. Cornelis de Witt had returned from the fleet after the battle at Solebay suffering from his recurring gout and had spent most of his days in bed ever since.¹¹³ When a group of citizens knocked on his door and told him to sign the abolition of the Perpetual Edict just as the other regents had done, Cornelis calmly ordered them to leave. When they threatened him with their pistols, Cornelis replied that he had just survived a battle at sea where cannons were fired at him, so he was hardly scared of a few bullets.¹¹⁴ His scared wife allegedly begged Cornelis to sign the paper.¹¹⁵ Cornelis added V.C. (*vi coactus*) to his name, signalling that he had signed the document “under duress”.¹¹⁶

Riots Everywhere

The events in Dordrecht were debated in the meeting of the States of Holland on 29 June. They were also repeated in several other cities during the days that followed. In chronological order, Haarlem, Schiedam, Rotterdam, Gouda, Delft, Amsterdam, The Hague and Leiden followed the example of Dordrecht.¹¹⁷ There had been contact between citizens in different cities on how to revolt and what to achieve. On 29 June, for example, news spread in Maassluis that anyone who wanted to do something for the state and for the prince of Orange, should come in “full armour” the next day, to undertake “a short campaign for the common good”. This army marched to Delft, where its arrival caused riots. The citizens from Delft who quickly joined their fellow rioters forced the magistrate to revoke the Perpetual Edict. The magistrate subsequently published a declaration stating that Delft wanted the prince of Orange to be appointed as stadholder, “as had happened in Dordrecht, Rotterdam and Gouda”.¹¹⁸

¹¹² Vive d'Orangie, Tiele 6065 (1672).

¹¹³ Panhuysen, *De Ware Vrijheid*, 428–430.

¹¹⁴ Cf. *Een Sociniaensche Consultatie* (1672), Knuttel 10341.

¹¹⁵ Valkenier, *'t Verwerde Europa*, 681.

¹¹⁶ Geyl, *Oranje en Stuart 1641–1672*, 295.

¹¹⁷ *Authentijke Haaghsche Nouvelles* (1672), Tiele 5906; Japikse, *Notulen*, 155.

¹¹⁸ Valkenier, *'t Verwerde Europa*, 684–685; Japikse, *Notulen*, 162, 235; *Copie. De Heeren van de Weth der Stadt Delft* (1672), Van der Wulp 4799.

Adding to personal contact between inhabitants of different cities, pamphlets carried information about what had happened to other places. In Haarlem news came in on 29 June that in Dordrecht, Rotterdam and Gouda “not only the rabble, but also the citizens” had forced their magistrates to promote the prince of Orange. The next day all the citizens in Haarlem mobilised. They forced the regents to send back a company of soldiers that was supposed to keep the peace in their city and took control themselves.¹¹⁹ Since pamphlets were the glue that held these riots together, it must not surprise us that the revolts demanding the appointment of the prince of Orange as stadholder followed a similar pattern. Different cities shared a common motivation. In most places, citizens rioted because they suspected that their regents had wanted to surrender to the French. In Haarlem, for example, riots were caused by stories about the meeting of the States General of 27 June, wherein – so it was claimed – delegates from Haarlem had voted in favour of surrendering the country to France.¹²⁰

William of Orange was portrayed as the solution to the problem of untrustworthy regents. The prince of Orange had the virtue of “love for the fatherland”, in contrast to regents who had the vice of self-interest. He stood above suspicion of betrayal. Wherever petitions were filed to support the riots, the demand to appoint the prince was on the list.¹²¹ In Leiden, the citizens had entered the meeting of the city council in full arms to demand the appointment of the prince, leaving capitulation to their wishes the only option.¹²²

The movements also shared similar structures. In all cities committees consisting of regents and citizens visited the prince of Orange and offered him the stadholderate. In Gouda, riots stopped after the committee was formed.¹²³ In Haarlem, a manufacturer of wooden shoes told the members

¹¹⁹ Langedult, *Kort verhaal*, 14–17.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 15.

¹²¹ The first wave of revolts produced eight printed petitions in Amsterdam, Middelburg, Zierikzee, Gorinchem, and Rotterdam. Seven of these petitions contained demands concerning the prince of Orange. Of all 59 demands, 11 directly concerned the prince of Orange. *Coppye*, Knuttel 10159; *Oprechten Eysch, en versoeck, van de Borgerye, aen de Magistraet der Stadt Gorcom* (1672), Petit 3960; *Request Aen Sijn Hoogheydt, den Heere Prince van Orange* (1672), Knuttel 10211; *Request Vande Amsterdamse Borgerye Aen Zijn Hoogheydt* (1672), Knuttel 10213; A. van Citters, *Artyckelen, welcke versocht zijn van de vroomen Burgers der Stadt Middelburgh* (1672), Tiele 6081; Coorne, *Aensprake*, Knuttel 10256; A. Couwenhove, *Versoeck Gedaen aen de E.E. Heeren Burgermeesteren ende Vroedschappen der Stadt Rotterdam* (1672), Knuttel 10145; C. Pous, *Breeden-Raedt* (1672), Knuttel 10162.

¹²² Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 687.

¹²³ *Extract Schryvens uyt Woerden, en van der Gouw, over het Verraedt op 't Leger van sijne Hoogheydt* (1672), Tiele 5929; Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 690–93; GAR, 1.01, 374.

of the committee, "You go to his Highness, but I advise you not to come back without him, or your life will end badly."¹²⁴

These citizens were informed about what happened by pamphlets. Lucas Watering, a member of the city militia in Amsterdam who sold scissiors and knives for a living, had read the published declaration from the States of Zeeland against the negotiations.¹²⁵ Printed material was, however, only one of his sources. Much of what he knew about political news, he had learned from conversations.¹²⁶ Watering, who lived on the Damrak, knew for instance exactly how the members of the city council in Amsterdam had voted on the peace negotiations with France during their meeting on 26 June – sixteen members wanted to defend the city, whereas twenty wanted to start peace negotiations. The minority threatened to call the citizenry into the city hall, which won the others over. The historian Piet Geyl claimed that Watering invented this story, for it was impossible for a citizen to know exactly what regents were up to. Reviewing the events of the year of disaster, there is little reason to agree with Geyl's assessment. During 1672, citizens were at the centre of the action.¹²⁷

Amsterdam

The Amsterdam militiaman Johannes Bruynsroth was sure that his mayor Lambert Reynst could not be trusted. Why then should Bruynsroth and his fellow militiamen give Reynst the city keys for the night, while they guarded them during the day? Bruynsroth was willing to admit that giving the mayors the city keys at night was an ancient ritual. But what if this so-called protector was in reality a traitor? Bruynsroth, who would play no significant role during the events to come, was not the only member of the militia to hold this view. A large number of militiamen refused to present the city keys to Reynst on June 26.¹²⁸ Bruynsroth visited Reynst personally and promised to shoot "a bullet through his head" if he took action against the militiamen.¹²⁹

¹²⁴ D. Guldewagen, *Extract uyt de Resolutien van de Heeren Raden, en Vroedtschappen der Stadt Haerlem* (1672), Knuttel 10139a; Langedult, *Kort verhaal*, 17; Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 682–84.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹²⁶ Cf. Nierop, "And Ye Shall Hear of Wars and Rumours of Wars".

¹²⁷ Gebhard, "Een dagboek uit het rampjaar 1672," 51. Cf. Geyl, *Oranje en Stuart 1641–1672*, 290.

¹²⁸ Salomons, "De rol van de Amsterdamse burgerbeweging," 205.

¹²⁹ Gebhard, "Een dagboek uit het rampjaar 1672," 52.

This instance shows, as do other reports from Amsterdam, that citizens had had their hand on the political pulse ever since 26 June, when their delegates had returned from the meeting of the States of Holland. Two delegates from the city of Edam passed through Amsterdam on their way to The Hague. They were halted by a group of city militia who brought them to the Haarlemmerplein, opened their bags and took out the instructions on how they were to vote on the negotiations during the next meeting of the States of Holland. It became clear that Edam supported the plans to negotiate a peace with France. One of the members of the city militia who had read the letter cried out, "these men should be hanged". The Edammers were sent to the city hall for investigation.¹³⁰

Moreover, citizens frequently visited regents at their houses and at the city hall. On 29 June, "many of the citizenry" came to the mayors and demanded to know whether they intended to defend the city or wanted to capitulate to France. The citizens received many promises but no results.¹³¹ The next day about two hundred merchants gathered for a meeting at the Exchange Hall because they "feared that the city would surrender to France".¹³² From the discussion that followed, it is clear that these citizens were not of one mind. Some wanted to protect their regents. Others chose the side of their friends, family and neighbours and thought it best to join the rioters. Lucas Watering claimed that "the citizenry has no place ordering the regents what to do, because then the regents are no longer regents".¹³³ According to Watering, the city keys had always resided at the mayors' houses and should stay there. Other citizens, however, refused to return the keys. The situation was saved by a compromise: mayor Reynst promised to sleep at the city hall from then on, so the citizens could check on him and the keys, while officially he had been given the keys back.¹³⁴ By that time, however, Amsterdam had become as riotous as most other cities in Holland and Zeeland. A regent from Amsterdam wrote to an English correspondent, "It is hard to describe our sad condition, every minute wee passe in danger of beeing plundered and murdered by the commonalty who now take liberty to say and do whatever they please without controlle".¹³⁵ That same day, the city decided to support the

¹³⁰ Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 690–693; Gebhard, "Een dagboek uit het rampjaar 1672," 57–58.

¹³¹ Ibid., 53.

¹³² Gebhard, "Een dagboek uit het rampjaar 1672," 54.

¹³³ Ibid., 55.

¹³⁴ Salomons, "De rol van de Amsterdamse burgerbeweging," 205.

¹³⁵ Colenbrander, *Bescheiden uit vreemde archieven. Tweede deel*, 132. Cf. Gebhard, "Amsterdamsche aantekeningen uit 1672," 178.

appointment of the prince of Orange. According to Lucas Watering, this was done “to prevent a bloodbath”.¹³⁶

Instead of a committee, Amsterdam sent Andries van der Graeff, one of the suspect regents, to bring the good news to the prince of Orange. When Van der Graeff tried to leave the city, several members of the city militia stopped him. A woman yelled, “This is a traitor who travels with letters and money to The Hague to surrender this city. Hold him and shoot him”. Van der Graeff fled from his carriage. His hat and wig were almost struck from his head. People threw at him whatever they could get their hands on and someone stabbed him with a dagger.¹³⁷ His attackers took him back to the city hall. When the news of Van der Graeff’s arrest became known, a general revolt broke out. Several citizens warned the Amsterdam magistrates that if they decided to surrender to the French, they would “hit Van der Graeff to death”.¹³⁸

After the attack on Van der Graeff, the magistrates publicly promised to defend the city until the last drop of blood.¹³⁹ This vow was published by being cried from the city hall and spread in print. According to Petrus Valkenier, “the news flew through the city like the wind”.¹⁴⁰ Subsequently the Perpetual Edict was burned with a candle for everyone to see.¹⁴¹ To prevent future riots, information about decisions taken by the Amsterdam city council was spread among the citizens. After the grievances of the Amsterdam citizens had been addressed, peace and calm returned – if only temporarily.

Rotterdam

In Rotterdam, riots flared up on 26 June, kindled by troubles in the neighbouring city of Schiedam, where on 25 June the regent Willem Nieuwpoort was attacked on the street and beaten to a pulp. To save his life Nieuwpoort was locked up in the prison of the city hall by his colleagues. After his imprisonment, some Schiedammers celebrated by raising an Orange flag, which was seen from a distance by citizens from Rotterdam, who were working on the defence of the city gate. They decided that their city would

¹³⁶ Gebhard, “Amsterdamsche aantekingen uit 1672,” 177.

¹³⁷ Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 688–693.

¹³⁸ Gebhard, “Amsterdamsche aantekingen uit 1672,” 165–166; Gebhard, “Een dagboek uit het rampjaar 1672,” 55–56.

¹³⁹ *Missive uyt Rotterdam*, Tiele 6063.

¹⁴⁰ Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 689.

¹⁴¹ Gebhard, “Een dagboek uit het rampjaar 1672,” 57; Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 710.

follow suit. After 25 June, citizens in Rotterdam took charge of all public life. They seized the city keys and decided from that point on who entered and left the city. When a delegation of the States of Holland tried to enter, some of the citizens declared that they “no longer acknowledged the States of Holland”.¹⁴²

One of these riotous citizens, the undertaker's man Jan van Schrieck, kept a diary of events after 25 June. Six years later, Van Schrieck sent his diary in a letter to Gaspar Fagel, who at that time was grand pensionary of Holland. His reasons for confessing his actions – Van Schrieck explicitly admitted that he had rioted – are unknown. From the letter it seems that he felt his role in the riots was unappreciated. Van Schrieck's story is trustworthy, especially because the regent Willebrord Vroesen, who wrote a personal account of Rotterdam, labelled Van Schrieck “a leader of the riots”.¹⁴³

Jan van Schrieck spent the days preceding and following the first big riot in Rotterdam snooping around the house of Pieter de Groot. He was not the only one. On the streets of Rotterdam, people were discussing whether the regents “preferred France to prince”.¹⁴⁴ Rumours about betrayal were sometimes reinforced by other regents, as we can see from the example of Daniel van Hogendorp, the *dijkgraaf* of Schieland, who stood before the city hall during a meeting of the city council and screamed that several regents were traitors. Hogendorp was later found sobbing inconsolably on the shoulders of Lena, a woman who sold oysters on the Great Market, regretting what he had done.¹⁴⁵ The houses of several regents had to be guarded by militiamen. The city council did not recognise at the time that protection by the city militia was no longer a guarantee of safety. Members of the city militia, including Van Schrieck, would turn on their government shortly after.

On Wednesday 29 June Van Schrieck's band of city militia was ordered to guard the old Church Street, where several regents were leaving church after morning services. Van Schrieck took the lead and asked these regents whether they “supported the prince of Orange, or not?”¹⁴⁶ One of them

¹⁴² Vroesen, *Waaragtig Verhaal*, 83. Cf. Oudaen, “Dagverhaal”; Valkenier, *'t Verwerde Europa*, 693; Roorda, “Rotterdam in het Rampjaar”; Colenbrander, *Bescheiden uit vreemde archieven. Tweede deel*, 130–31, 37.

¹⁴³ Jan van Schrieck, “Jornaal van Jan van Schrieck over de ongeregeltheden te Rotterdam 1672,” in NA 3.01.18 115 (1672); Vroesen, *Waaragtig Verhaal*, 1, 57, 126, 43–48; *Vriende-Praetje*, Knuttel 10333, 5.

¹⁴⁴ Vroesen, *Waaragtig Verhaal*, 5.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

asked Van Schrieck who had put him up to asking these questions and what he intended to do with the information. Van Schrieck answered that it was his own idea and that he wanted to destroy the Perpetual Edict and appoint the prince of Orange to the office of stadholder.

That afternoon, Van Schrieck rallied 2000 citizens to arms.¹⁴⁷ The main rioters – they described themselves as “merchants” – went to the house of Johan van Lit, seller of German wines, where they held a meeting.¹⁴⁸ They decided to make their local government appoint the prince of Orange. To emphasise where political power lay, Van Schrieck stated, “we will make the magistrates do it tonight and make them confirm it openly”.¹⁴⁹ One of the city’s regents, Johan Pesser, tried to escape the city before the meeting of the city council that night, but he was caught and violently forced back to the city hall. As he travelled to the meeting, Pesser was made to take off his hat as a sign of political submission and yell out “viva Orange” at the top of his lungs. Like his colleague Nieuwpoort in Schiedam, Pesser was put in the prison at the city hall, where he remained locked up for five days. According to Samuel Tucker, who was in Rotterdam at the time, Pesser “was likely to have his brayne knockt out”.¹⁵⁰

On 29 June a man called Verwagt presented a petition to the regents demanding that all members of the city council swear to defend the city to the last drop of blood and never to surrender to the French unless the citizens gave their blessing.¹⁵¹ The regents accepted the petition largely because armed members of the city militia were looking menacingly over their shoulders.¹⁵² The citizens of Rotterdam were successful: members of the city council denounced the Perpetual Edict in a declaration that they all signed, as had happened in Dordrecht. The declaration was cried aloud from the city hall to a cheering crowd.¹⁵³ The prince of Orange wrote a thank-you note to Rotterdam and excused himself because he could not visit the city. William had more important things to do. He was preparing for his appointment as stadholder of the entire province of Holland.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁷ Oudaen, “Dagverhaal”; Vroesen, *Waaragtig Verhaal*, 56.

¹⁴⁸ Vroesen, *Waaragtig Verhaal*, 57.

¹⁴⁹ Schrieck, “Jornaal,” 4–5.

¹⁵⁰ Colenbrander, *Bescheiden uit vreemde archieven. Tweede deel*, 141–142; Oudaen, “Dagverhaal”.

¹⁵¹ *Copie van een Brief uyt Rotterdam* (1672), Tiele 6057. Cf. *Uyt Rotterdam*, Van der Wulp 4792; *Copie*, Tiele 6057; Vroesen, *Waaragtig Verhaal*, 17–19, 70; *Copie*, Tiele 6057.

¹⁵² Schrieck, “Jornaal,” 7; Roorda, *Het Rampjaar 1672*, 62–66.

¹⁵³ Vroesen, *Waaragtig Verhaal*, 78–81. Cf. D. Schaep, *Notificatie* (1672), Tiele 6058. Cf. *Request*, Knuttel 10211.

¹⁵⁴ Nassau, *Missive*, Knuttel 10141. Cf. *Op ’t verkiesen van sijn Hoogheydt*, Knuttel 10251.

CHAPTER FIVE

A NEW STADHOLDER

Between 26 June and 1 July 1672, riots broke out in all the large cities in Holland and Zeeland. These riots followed the pattern of those in Amsterdam and Rotterdam. The riotous citizens in all cities demanded the appointment of William to the office of stadholder.

On 1 July, the delegates from the eighteen voting cities and the nobility came together in the States of Holland. The pressure on these men was enormous. Their cities were on fire. They had no choice but to discuss the appointment of the prince of Orange. The nobility opened the debate and suggested revoking the Perpetual Edict.¹ This meeting, which would lead to William's appointment, would last four days.

Nobleman Philips Jacob van Boetzelaer, lord of Asperen (1634–1688) informed William of all developments during these days.² Van Boetzelaer, who would later play a role in the murder of Johan and Cornelis de Witt, had a keen eye for political developments. On 1 July, he predicted that the prince would be stadholder within three days. Indeed, the States of Holland appointed William on 4 July.³ Arlington wrote to Clifford that the prince of Orange now had “all authority in his hands”.⁴ According to another correspondent, the appointment had been the result of the “fury of the people”.⁵

Shortly after, a “popular fury” incited the members of the provincial states in Zeeland to appoint William to the office of stadholder as well.⁶ In Veere, for example, riotous citizens attacked the regent Paulus Andreas van der Muelen on the street in broad daylight. These angry citizens wanted to know what kind of resolutions the regents had agreed to in the meeting of the States of Zeeland. This violence was “daily business”

¹ Japikse, *Notulen*, 163.

² Japikse, *Correspondentie van Willem III en van Hans Willem Bentinck*, 56.

³ Japikse, *Notulen*, 163–170.

⁴ Colenbrander, *Bescheiden uit vreemde archieven. Tweede deel*, 147.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Japikse, *Correspondentie van Willem III en van Hans Willem Bentinck*, 59–60. Cf. Wicquefort, “Mémoires,” 13; Roorda, *Partijen Factie*, 126–127.

many-headed monster".⁷ On 8 July, the regents from Zeeland were happy to publish the results of their meetings. The prince had been reinstalled in the office that his ancestors had held in Zeeland.

A Pamphlet Storm

Following the prince of Orange's appointment in Holland and Zeeland, several pamphleteers published their views and a number of laudatory poems were put on the market.⁸ In July, every day six new titles appeared on the market. With reprints included, Dutchmen could choose from eleven pamphlets each day. In terms of propaganda, these predominantly Orangist publications had two goals. First of all, pamphleteers described the new spirit that had come over the Dutch after the prince had been made stadholder.⁹ Secondly, they sought to undermine the True Freedom.

In reality, fighting against the foreign enemies had slowed down considerably. The *waterlinie*, the last defence line of the Republic, worked. The French army had not made any particular progress after Louis XIV had set up base camp at Zeist and decided to start negotiations. During this period of military temporisation, success stories about the military command of the prince of Orange appeared.¹⁰ Thousands of Frenchmen had supposedly been slaughtered in Vlissingen, leaving the harbour filled with French corpses. According to the pamphleteer, one could "cross the water walking on the bodies".¹¹ This was, however, good news with a black border. Pamphleteers stressed that now citizens had to be obedient, but they added that this obedience was owed only to Orangist regents. The pamphlet *Heldere Dageraad* claimed, for example, that the citizens had to be

⁷ Japikse, *Correspondentie van Willem III en van Hans Willem Bentinck*, 59–60.

⁸ *Lang leef de Prins. Landtgedicht* (1672), Knuttel 10254; *Vive d'Orangie*, Tiele 6065; H. van Bulderen, *Zegenwenschingh*, Tiele 6164; J. van der Does, *Zegen-Wensch*, Knuttel 10255; G.S., *Op 't Eligeren van Syn Hoogheyt Wilhelm van Nassouw* (1672), Tiele 6161; H.S.S., *Den Slaperigen Batavier*, Tiele 6176; Hellebuyck, *'t Lof van Orangien*, Knuttel 10253; P.A. van der Meulen, *Missive van Congratulatie* (1672), Knuttel 10143; Neuye, *Ad Celsissimum*, Tiele 6162; J. Orizant, *Zegepraal* (1672), Knuttel 10252; M. Paeuw, *Lof en Zeege-Juygingh Syne Doorluchtige Hoogheit Willem Henrick* (1672), Tiele 6163; Symonsz, *Diogenus Tonne-Rollen*, Tiele 6177; *De Geest van Willem de Eerste verschenen aan Willem de Derde* (1672), Tiele 6178.

⁹ *Desseyne Van den Koningh van Vrackrijck* (1672), Knuttel 10283. Cf. Valkenier, *'t Verwerde Europa*, 700.

¹⁰ *De Victorie van Mastricht* (1672), Tiele 6398; *Missive uyt Mastricht* (1672), Tiele 5956; *Missive, geschreven uyt Mastricht* (1672), Tiele 6399; H. Blasphel, *Verhael van den aenval der Francen op Louvesteyn* (1672), Tiele 5949; *Brief uyt het Leger Van sijn Hoogheydt de Heere Prince van Oranje* (1672), Tiele 5961.

¹¹ *Copye*, Tiele 6061.

obedient to the “good (meaning Orangist) regents”.¹² The phrase “to prefer France to prince” morphed into “prefer death to France”.¹³

The Two Faces of the Prince

Confirming his reputation for being enigmatic, the prince of Orange initially condemned the movement that had set in motion his appointment to the office of stadholder.¹⁴ William spread a publication wherein he dismissed any ideas of treason by regents. The letter was composed (not by William himself) only days after his appointment and published on 8 July. There were both “general” editions of this publication and customized editions for the cities where citizens had rioted.¹⁵

According to William's letter, the riots that had broken out in the Dutch Republic had not been caused by treason. The French armies had marched into the heart of the Republic, which had caused many commanders, officers and soldiers (but no regents) to flee. The prince of Orange argued that this flight had caused an inaccurate but “general impression among the citizens of the province of Holland that their regents had not taken care of their responsibilities”.¹⁶ The citizens had consequently lost their trust in and respect for their regents, which had undercut the obedience that citizens normally owed to government. The prince resolutely stated that this disobedience should end immediately, and he promised to make an example of anyone who continued disobeying government.

In general, historians have seen this letter as an expression of William's real feelings about the riots.¹⁷ His input to the letter reached, however,

¹² *De Heldere Dageraad*, Knuttel 10311, 7.

¹³ *Bedenkingen*, Knuttel 10265, 12.

¹⁴ E.H. Kossmann, “Koning-stadhouder Willem III,” in *Vergankelijkheid en continuïteit. Opstellen over geschiedenis*, ed. E.H. Kossmann (Amsterdam, 1995), 90.

¹⁵ *Brief van Sijn Hoogheydt, den Heere Prince van Orange, Geschreven aende Leden van de respectie Steden van Hollant en Westvrieslant* (1672), Knuttel 10144; *Copie, Missive, By sijn Hoogheydt den Heere Prince van Orange, Geschreven aen de E.E. Heeren Burgemeesteren ende Regeerders der Stadt Delff* (1672), Knuttel 10154; *Missive Van sijn Hoogheydt Den Heere Prins van Orange, Aen haer Ed. Groot-Achth. de Heeren Borgermeesteren, ende Regeerders der Stadt Amsterdam* (1672), Knuttel 10157; *Missive, By sijn Hoogheydt den Heere Prince van Orange, Geschreven aen de E.E. Heeren Burgemeesteren ende Regeerders der Stadt Haerlem* (1672), Knuttel 10155; *Brief van Sijn Hoogheydt, den Heere Prince van Orange, Geschreven aende Leden vande respectie Steden van Hollant en Westvrieslant* (1672), Tiele 6070. Cf. *Gemeene Mompeling en Misnoegen van Jan Rap, en sijn Maet* (1672), Knuttel 10305. Cf. *Naebedenckingen Over seeckere Waerschouwinge* (1672), Knuttel 10389, 3.

¹⁶ *Brief*, Knuttel 10144.

¹⁷ Franken, *Coenraad van Beuningen*, 107; Geyl, *Oranje en Stuart 1641–1672*, 314–315; Japikse, *Prins Willem III. De stadhouder-koning*, 216; Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 135; Troost, *Stadhouder-koning Willem III*, 92.

little further than his signature, for he had been pressured into writing the letter by the States of Holland. At that time, claimed the regent Willebrord Vroesen, “the prince dared not to refuse anything that the States of Holland asked him”.¹⁸ In the meeting of the States of Holland on 4 July, Amsterdam had proposed that the new stadholder be allowed to publish a pamphlet to “repair the authority of the magistrates and especially to fend off the ideas of treason”.¹⁹ This letter had never been William’s idea, but it was obvious that obedience was needed at the time. The regent from Zeeland Justus de Huybert wrote that despite the appointment of the prince, riots had not yet stopped. “The puniest of enemies could strike us down with one hand”, claimed De Huybert.²⁰ Buckingham agreed after he had visited the town of Sluis in Zeeland on 5 July. “I believe I might have taken that town myself”, he wrote. “There are nou soldiers here at all, for the townes men will not let them come in, who are themselves in armes, and very drunck with drinking the King of England and the prince of Orange’s health”.²¹ One day later, the Englishman E.W. Seymour, who resided in the Dutch Republic in July 1672, described the further collapse of political obedience: “The lowest mechannick thinkes himselve an egall for the best stadtholder, and the stadtholders [he meant regents] themselves would gladly bee anything soe they could be safe”.²² During the meeting of the States of Holland on 4 July, Haarlem explained the problem: “There is a large animosity between regents and citizenry”. Haarlem believed that this problem should be handled “in a most civilised way”.²³ William’s letter was this “civilised” solution.

By 12 July, William’s stance on the involvement of regents, in particular those who supported the True Freedom, had changed diametrically.²⁴ William still propagated obedience, but adherents of the True Freedom were no longer to be its recipient. Most significantly, after 8 July William recognised that he did not need to follow orders from the States of Holland, who were now referred to in diplomatic correspondence as “fearful and helpless”.²⁵ After riots had flared up again during the next couple of days, on 12 July the States of Holland asked William to agree to an Act against

¹⁸ Vroesen, *Waaragtig Verhaal*, 128.

¹⁹ Japikse, *Notulen*, 172, 98.

²⁰ Worp, *De Briefwisseling van Constantijn Huygens*, 306–307.

²¹ Colenbrander, *Bescheiden uit vreemde archieven II*, 148.

²² Colenbrander, *Bescheiden uit vreemde archieven. Tweede deel*, 150.

²³ Japikse, *Notulen*, 173–178.

²⁴ *Onpartydige Consideratien*, Knuttel 10340, 4. Cf. Japikse, *Notulen*, 205.

²⁵ Colenbrander, *Bescheiden uit vreemde archieven. Tweede deel*, 149.

Sedition, a second “most civilised” attempt to defend the regents.²⁶ This time William refused to cooperate with the States of Holland. The prince claimed that he did not believe that the document would promote peace because the first letter had not worked at all.²⁷ Furthermore, he refused to visit the cities where riots had broken out because, he claimed, “then I have to visit all cities”.²⁸ He did, however, compose another publication that warned the citizens that if they did not calm down and pay taxes, they would no longer “be considered patriots”.²⁹ At this time, when being a patriot was synonymous with supporting the prince of Orange, delegates in the States of Holland started to doubt William’s motivations. Nobody knew what to expect from this young prince.

Good Orangism

After the first week of July, the defence of the Republic rested on the shoulders of the new stadholder and the citizens. The old government had failed to protect the Dutch cities and provinces. This was the message in pamphlets that thousands of Dutchmen read, heard or discussed on the street, in bars or in barges every day. This message fed political polarisation. Local, regional and national issues were increasingly often explained as results of the schism between Orangists and adherents of the True Freedom.³⁰

The support for Orangists (by propagandists, groups of citizens and individual writers) overwhelmed the support for the True Freedom. The supporters of the prince of Orange published twenty-six pamphlets in June alone. In that month, not a single pamphlet that criticised the prince of Orange was published, which shows that an attack on the prince had by then become such a radical proposition that no one could expect success in such an effort. In July, the numbers became even more convincing. The seventy-four pamphlets that supported Orange trumped the nine pamphlets that supported the True Freedom. A character in the dialogue *Vervolgh op het Bootsmans Praetje* summed up this polarisation, claiming that “The people only want to hear the news, and whatever [pamphlet]

²⁶ Vroesen, *Waaragtig Verhaal*, 155; Japikse, *Notulen*, 207.

²⁷ Japikse, *Notulen*, 216–217.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 218.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Cf. *Waerschouwinghe aen alle Edelmoedige en getrouwe Inwoonders en Liefhebbers van son Lieve en diergekochte Vaderlant* (1672), Tiele 6249.

mentions the prince, is a success.”³¹ Adherent of the True Freedom became synonymous with regent from Holland. And Holland was dangerous because this province wanted, according to several pamphleteers, to “cast away” the other provinces.³²

This negative attitude towards the men of the True Freedom was combined with high expectations for the new stadholder. The prince was expected to put several changes into practice. Citizens would regain their privileges and freedom.³³ A certain and quick peace with England was forecast.³⁴ When the English ambassadors came into Maassluis on 4 July, the Dutch yelled, “God blesse the king of England and the prince, and the devil take the States”.³⁵ This sentiment was apparent in England as well. On 7 July, Coenraed van Beuningen declared in the meeting of the States of Holland that the problems with England could have been prevented if the prince of Orange had been made stadholder sooner. According to Van Beuningen, in England people had yelled, “Vive le roy d’Angleterre et le prince d’Orange” on the streets.³⁶ Many hoped that the promotion of the prince of Orange would spark off a return to religious orthodoxy. All 156 preachers of Friesland, for example, had sent (and published) a letter to the prince of Orange, collectively asking him to support and promote the “True Reformed Religion”.³⁷

“Crying Orange” was no longer enough. Now was the time to combine words with actions. “Everyone claims to be an Orangist”, complained a pamphleteer, “The mouth that says it lies as long as there is no proof. Do not just say it, but do it.”³⁸ What was the audience of this pamphlet supposed to do to prove its loyalty? Pay taxes and fight for the fatherland.

Undermining the True Freedom

Besides the promotion of good Orangism, pamphleteers had another goal during the first days after the appointment of William to the office

³¹ *Vervolgh Op het Bootsmans Praetje* (1672), Knuttel 10303, 2.

³² *t Secreet van de Mis*, Knuttel 10351. Cf. Japikse, *Notulen*, 230. Cf. *Den Politiquen Mantel*, Knuttel 10292, 3; *Deductie*, Knuttel 10380; *Bedenkingen*, Knuttel 10265, 7; *t Secreet van de Mis, Of Kristalyne Bril* (1672), Knuttel 10351; *Apologie*, Knuttel 10263, 7.

³³ *Den Bedrogen Engelsman Met de handen in 't Hair* (1672), Van Alphen 366, 8.

³⁴ *Missive uyt Engelandt* (1672), Tiele 6069.

³⁵ Colenbrander, *Bescheiden uit vreemde archieven. Tweede deel*, 145.

³⁶ Japikse, *Notulen*, 187.

³⁷ Coorne, *Aensprake*, Knuttel 10256.

³⁸ *Bazuyn om op te wecken alle Liefhebbers van 't Vaderlandt* (1672), Van der Wulp 4885.

of stadholder. The politics of the True Freedom had to be undermined. Although evidence is secondary and incidental, this campaign was most likely inspired by William himself and his most important propagandist, Gaspar Fagel. Fagel, a lawyer from the town of Haarlem, was the first of his family to reach the highest echelon in Dutch government, despite the fact that his family had held offices for generations. In 1664, Fagel had become pensionary of Haarlem. Six years later, Johan de Witt chose him as the *griffier* of the States General. In 1672, Fagel would succeed Johan de Witt as grand pensionary of Holland, by which time he was already publicly known as William's confidant and main advisor. Despite the fact that Fagel was physically weak, which caused him to miss many meetings, he was a first-class propagandist.³⁹ On 1 July – a week before the letter of 8 July – Fagel had already asked the prince of Orange for permission to counter the propaganda that had slandered the prince.⁴⁰ While the prince of Orange claimed in the letter that he wrote for the States of Holland on 8 July that he did not know of any suspect regents, he simultaneously orchestrated a campaign wherein it was claimed that the treason of these men was the cause of the Dutch despair.

The pamphlets that can be considered part of this campaign shared similar lines of reasoning. All looked back over the last twenty-two years and rewrote history. Events were now described as the outcome of a struggle between the True Freedom and the prince of Orange. These pamphleteers concluded that the period of the True Freedom had been motivated by hatred, self-interest and particularism, which had all been aimed at founding a political system of “slavery”.

A prime example is the pamphlet *Verscheide Consideratien*, which was printed one day after the appointment of the prince of Orange to the office of stadholder.⁴¹ Nine editions of this pamphlet appeared in 1672, and it proved to be one of the most influential of the period. One commentator claimed that the *Verscheide Consideratien* had even caused riots because it had been spread amongst the people who had considered it to be “as holy as the Gospel”.⁴² The author of *Verscheide Consideratien* reviewed current events and concluded that “It is hardly imaginable, and I believe for other nations unbelievable that the king of France has conquered such

³⁹ E. Edwards, “An Unknown Statesman? Gaspar Fagel in the Service of William III and the Dutch Republic,” *History* 87 (2002): 353–371; Roorda, *Partij en factie*, 146.

⁴⁰ Japikse, *Correspondentie van Willem III en van Hans Willem Bentinck*, 58.

⁴¹ *Verscheide Consideratien*, Knuttel 10224.

⁴² Vryling, *Het onbevleete Wit*, Knuttel 10230, 4.

a beautiful Republic that had been envied by the entire world in a few days". Foul play was the only explanation for the swift surrender of the three provinces. Ambassador Pieter de Groot had obviously tried to sell the country to France, putting the Dutch freedom that had been established by the princes of Orange in jeopardy.⁴³

This pamphleteer, and many more with him, believed that traces of the deceit by the adherents of the True Freedom could be found in the entire history of the Dutch Republic. "That old dog's ass" Johan van Oldenbarnevelt (1547–1619) was their first victim. Had not all adherents of the True Freedom been poisoned by "the seed of Oldenbarnevelt"? The paranoia went further. Had not the death of Orangist lieutenant-admiral Maarten Harpertsz Tromp (1598–1653) been suspicious? Had not that "pious hero" been killed by the shot of a musket, even though the ships of the enemy were at a distance of at least three musket shots? Was this a clear example of an assassination by the Loevesteyn Faction? The point of these writers was clear: the current war had been caused by the long-term betrayal by regents, not by the French or the English.⁴⁴

There is some irony in the fact that at the time Orangist propaganda was accusing the adherents of the True Freedom of having betrayed the Dutch Republic (which in reality they had not), the prince of Orange was engaged in secret negotiations with Charles II that crossed into the grey area of treason.⁴⁵

The States General had left all negotiations with England to William after his appointment as stadholder. On 16 July, the definitive demands by France and England were published and distributed throughout the Republic. On 20 July, William promised in a passionate speech in the States of Holland that he would not even consider giving in to these demands. Negotiations were off the table. William and the Dutch would fight on. In reality, however, secret negotiations between William and Charles had been going on for a while. William had sent Gabriel Sylvius, one of his confidants, to England with a counter offer that would bring peace. William asked for money, Surinam and the freedom to fish in the North Sea, but above all sovereignty over the Seven Provinces for himself.

⁴³ *Verscheyde Consideratien*, Knuttel 10224, 2.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Japikse, *Correspondentie van Willem III en van Hans Willem Bentinck*, 80. Cf. Colenbrander, *Bescheiden uit vreemde archieven. Tweede deel*, 150, 68; Fruin, "Willem III en zijn geheime onderhandelingen met Karel II van Engeland in 1672"; Geyl, *Oranje en Stuart 1641–1672*, 320–321; Japikse, *Prins Willem III. De stadhouder-koning*, 234; Troost, *Stadhouder-koning Willem III*, 91. Cf. R. Fruin, *De oorlog van 1672*, 173–198.

William added that if Charles agreed to these conditions, Charles would have to convince Louis XIV himself. Charles was not impressed. The proposal remained unanswered.

These negotiations remained secret for many years. In 1736 the story about the secret negotiations was brought into the open as an addendum to the *Historisch Verhaal* by Bernardus Costerus (1645–1735), a regent from Woerden. William had indeed tried to become the sovereign ruler of the Republic. The undermining of the True Freedom, his political adversaries, had simply been a means to this goal.

Attacking the “Harmful Freedom”

Why were Orangists so successful with their propaganda while the men of the True Freedom failed so miserably? It all seems illogical. Were not Orangists “old-fashioned semi-monarchists”, as they have been labelled by Gert-Onno van de Klashorst and Ernst Kossmann, while the adherents of the True Freedom filled their agenda with ideas that sound so appealing to modern readers, such as (religious) tolerance, the replacement of virtue-based politics by a rationalized balance of interests, new science and modern ideas of sovereignty?⁴⁶ Was not this a clear example of old against new? And should not new have won this battle?

The government to which the True Freedom aspired never knew the popularity that Orangism enjoyed. The explanation lies partly in the way both groups used pamphlets. Orangist political thought was perhaps not as theoretically innovative as the collected works of the adherents of the True Freedom, but it filled this void with effective propaganda campaigns.⁴⁷

Before we look at these differences in more detail, it is important to point out the widely overlooked similarities between Orangism and the True Freedom. Both ideologies were predominantly republican. A division between monarchical Orangism and republican True Freedom does not pass scrutiny, above all because among all the different kinds of Orangists, the majority thought negatively about monarchy.⁴⁸ Also, both political preferences were in essence intended to preserve Dutch freedom and

⁴⁶ Klashorst, “Metten schijn van monarchie getemperd,” 125; Kossmann, *Political Thought in the Dutch Republic*, 112.

⁴⁷ J. Stern, *Orangism in the Dutch Republic*, 2.

⁴⁸ Frijhoff, 1650, 36; E.H. Kossmann, *Political Thought*, 50–51; W. Velema, “Het Nederlandse vrijheidsbegrip. Ter inleiding,” in *Vrijheid*, ed. Haitsma Mulier and Velema, 5.

prevent a lapse into corrupt government. The True Freedom would curtail tyranny, while Orangism would prevent oligarchy.

The most important distinction between the two ideologies was in their notion of freedom. To analyse the political thought of the True Freedom, the work of the brothers Johan (1622–1660) and Pieter (1618–1685) de la Court, two merchants from Leiden, provides an obvious starting point. Whether these men were self-consciously part of the True Freedom (which can be doubted) is not as important as the fact that Orangists used their work as a yardstick to measure the political thought of the True Freedom.⁴⁹ The world of Pieter de la Court (since Johan died in 1660, Pieter is regarded as the more important author) was the world of Tacitus and Hobbes, wherein everyone was at war with everyone else and governments were installed to control this continual struggle. Since rulers were driven by passions just like other men, a monarch, and more particularly a monarch's court, would pursue its own interest instead of the common good. The political world of this merchant was a far cry from princely government based on virtue. In short, he claimed that "princes and freedom did not mix".⁵⁰

De la Court recommended getting rid of the office of stadholder and the court that accompanied it. He also proposed a concept of freedom wherein a citizen's personal interest was corrected by the interests of other citizens, through representation and broad political participation. He constructed, as Hans W. Blom has put it, a "political market order".⁵¹ The axiom that accompanied this stew of interests was that "the wellbeing of rulers should depend on the wellbeing of the ruled".⁵² In all fairness to De la Court, the practice of the government during the period of the True Freedom did not reflect his ideas, and indeed De la Court became increasingly critical of the movement he once propagated.

Realist Politics

Orangists did not make this distinction between De la Court's theory and the realities of contemporary government. They portrayed De la Court as Johan de Witt's mouthpiece⁵³ and commented on the *Interest of Holland*,

⁴⁹ Klashorst, "De ware vrijheid, 1650–1672," 183.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 177. Cf. De la Court, *Interest van Holland*, Knuttel 8652.

⁵¹ H.W. Blom, "Vrijheid in de natuurrechtelijke politieke theorie in de zeventiende-eeuwse Republiek," in *Vrijheid*, ed. Haitsma Mulier and Velema, 146–148.

⁵² Ibid., 148.

⁵³ Blom, *Morality and Causality in Politics*, 159.

which to a large extent replicated Johan de Witt's ideas. Johan de Witt had indeed written two chapters of this publication.⁵⁴ Orangists did not respond to De la Court's marketplace of interests with a systematic and coherent set of political ideas. They proposed a political system based on realist politics.⁵⁵ And herein lay the secret of Orangist success: Orangists connected their ideas to the political reality. Orangist pamphleteers, for example, struck a blow at the work of De la Court by claiming that while a balance of interests might be a lovely idea, the common good had hardly been the end of government during the last twenty-two years. Certain regents had claimed to act on behalf of the general interest, while in reality they had taken care only of themselves and their families and friends. One pamphleteer wrote of the De Witt family:

Has Jacob de Witt not been made member of the Chamber of Accounts, where he does not have to account for expenses? Has his oldest son not immediately been appointed to the office of grand pensionary, claiming similar respect as the princes of Orange? Has his second son Cornelis not received one of the most honourable and profitable charges in the state?⁵⁶

To sum up: the political thought of the True Freedom had for a while successfully raised objections against the possible tyranny of a stadholder, but it had not been successful in preventing oligarchy, which caused the foundation of its entire structure to crumble.

It was not enough, however, to cry oligarchy. The Orangist stadholder would have to be presented as a convincing answer to oligarchy and not a possible future tyrant. Orangists reassured the public that the prince would always have the interest of the entire state at heart because no one had more to lose in the fatherland. William could become more important only "if the state remained intact". Propagandists quoted a political axiom of the time: "A king cannot be a traitor because the king is the state. By surrendering the state, he will destroy himself."⁵⁷ The pamphleteers who

⁵⁴ R. Fruin, "Het aandeel van den raadspensionaris De Witt aan het Interest van Holland van Pieter de la Court," 42–53; I.W. Wildenberg, "Appreciaties van de gebroeders De la Court ten tijde van de Republiek," *Tijdschrift voor geschiedenis* 98 (1985).

⁵⁵ Klashorst, "Metten schijn van monarchie getemperd," 124. Cf. *De Heldere Dageraad*, Knuttel 10311, 3–5; *Deductie*, Knuttel 10380; *Den Grooten en Witten Duyvel*, Knuttel 10317, 21; *Den Politiquen Mantel*, Knuttel 10292, 5; *'t Secreet van de Mis*, Knuttel 10351.

⁵⁶ *Bedenkingen*, Knuttel 10265, 5; *Ronde Waerheydt*, Knuttel 10222, 10. Cf. Stern, *Orangism in the Dutch Republic*; Klashorst, "Metten schijn van monarchie getemperd," 124; *De Heldere Dageraad*, Knuttel 10311, 3–5; *Deductie*, Knuttel 10380; *Den Grooten en Witten Duyvel*, Knuttel 10317, 21; *Den Politiquen Mantel*, Knuttel 10292, 5; *'t Secreet van de Mis*, Knuttel 10351.

⁵⁷ *Apologie*, Knuttel 10263, 5. Cf. E.H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ, 1997 [first edition 1957]).

wrote took this line ignored the topos of the two bodies of the king, which was important in late medieval and early modern political thought but appears to have had little role to play in 1672. Its absence is remarkable. On many occasions during the last years, True Freedom propaganda had argued that Johan de Witt and William got along perfectly as individuals, but that De Witt thought the office of stadholder harmful for the Dutch Republic.⁵⁸ At no point did Orangists argue that the man and the office could be seen as separate entities. To do so would have left open the option of removing the prince of Orange but preserving the office of stadholder, and that was not William's goal.

Orangist propagandists still had one task to complete. To reclaim the term freedom they presented themselves as champions of traditional political values against dangerous new radical notions of power.⁵⁹ In this process, Orangists labelled the True Freedom a failed experiment.

Orangist Freedom

What kind of freedom did these Orangists present as an alternative to the True Freedom? Their freedom was not unlimited. Orangist pamphleteers leaned heavily on the classical argument that too much freedom was destructive. The author of *Den Grooten en Witten Duyvel* doubted whether the True Freedom had been freedom at all, as citizens had been forced to act against their conscience. "We are turned into slaves when our freedom is taken away, but we become slaves of slaves, slaves of sin even, when we are prevented from doing good, when we are forced to do evil by an [Perpetual] Edict."⁶⁰

It was no coincidence that Pieter de Huybert (1622–1697), the pensionary from Zeeland, started his argument at the same point as De la Court: with a reference to Hobbes' state of anarchy and the installation of government that was supposed to remedy this evil. According to De Huybert, it had been clear from the beginning that "too much freedom was in fact slavery and harmful to governments and subject". That the solution to such an unhealthy abundance of freedom was the appointment of a governor (read stadholder) helped the Orangist argument that a lawful

⁵⁸ Vryling, *Het onbevleekte Wit*, Knuttel 10230, 13.

⁵⁹ Geyl, "Het stadhouderschap in de partijliteratuur onder De Witt," 39.

⁶⁰ *Den Grooten en Witten Duyvel*, Knuttel 10317, 12. Cf. Vryling, *Het onbevleekte Wit*, Knuttel 10230, 205.

ruler “did not take away freedom”.⁶¹ The common people could not understand everything, which rendered too much freedom damaging.⁶² De Huybert, who would fall out with the Orange family after 1672 because his son was repeatedly passed over for offices, used the work of Demosthenes (384–322 BC) to prove that too much freedom turns men into animals, and he quoted Roman Law to prove that political freedom should be seen as like a woman's freedom, which starts only after marriage in a situation that is known as the “free state of slavery”.⁶³

The Orangist who wrote under the pseudonym Johan Fidelis argued along similar lines. He also turned to Hobbes in fending off resistance and riotous citizens. Fidelis claimed that a people that had been raised in slavery could not live freely, which explained why “visionary” politicians tried to interest the citizenry in government with an eminent head. The other option, claimed Fidelis, was to unleash the wild animal (“as we may, quoting Hobbes, label the raging rabble in Holland”). Every political organisation that left room for such riots was, in short, slavery. The best form of government was that which left no possibility of such political violence.⁶⁴

Where did these arguments lead? Monarchy and aristocracy are not necessarily less advantageous than democracy – the classical argument that all had their advantages and disadvantages and that a mixed form was preferable – and freedom should be used with temperance.⁶⁵ The mixed form of government was the only option for the Dutch Republic. According to De Huybert, the True Freedom had been problematic because the freedom it proposed was of a kind that the Dutch were not used to. De Huybert argued, as so many did at this time, that the type of government should be directly linked to the nature of the people being governed.⁶⁶ But how could one determine that nature and government were in accord? The answer came from the classical age. The longer a governmental form had lasted, the better it suited the people. De Huybert wrote, “To live after habit and nature, is truly freedom.”⁶⁷ De Huybert used the Restoration in England as an example of a people returned to its normal and natural freedom. For the English, monarchy was “true freedom”. De Huybert's attack

⁶¹ Huybert, *Verdediging Van de Oude Hollantsche Regeringh*, Knuttel 9970a, 1–3.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 3.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁶⁴ Fidelis, *Hollants Mars-Banquet*, Knuttel 10308, 4–13.

⁶⁵ Huybert, *Verdediging Van de Oude Hollantsche Regeringh*, Knuttel 9970a, 5–6.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 6–10.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

on Johan de Witt was straightforward: everyone who changed the form of government did so in the name of freedom, but his actions had produced only a simulacrum of freedom.⁶⁸

What was normal and natural for the Dutch? According to De Huybert, the answer was to be found in a mixed government that would avoid tyranny, oligarchy and anarchy. Adapting Paulus Merula's translation of the Aristotelian threefold divide for a Dutch context, De Huybert concluded that the Dutch political structure had a stadholder who represented the monarchical (and in the Dutch context, military) element, the provincial states who represented aristocratic government and lastly the cities (not the people) which served as council and represented the democratic form of government.⁶⁹

Having asserted that freedom meant "good government" not self-government, Orangist propagandists explained that the adherents of the True Freedom had not produced this good government. Take, for example, foreign policy. Orangists defined freedom as the independence that had been founded by the "goods and blood" of the ancestors in their struggle against Spain.⁷⁰ Orangist freedom meant the freedom of the Dutch Republic, while True Freedom meant the freedom of Holland.⁷¹ This reasoning permitted pamphleteers to make emotional claims about freedom without actually explaining what it meant. Most mentioned a connection between Orangist freedom, the fatherland and the True Reformed Religion. The first prince of Orange, the father of the fatherland, had fought tyranny and slavery and had defeated Catholicism. Since the revolt now lay some time ago, at least in comparison to the infant True Freedom, Orangist freedom could claim the ancienity that enabled its description as "natural freedom". One pamphleteer wrote simply, "We will regain our ancient freedom under the prince of Orange".⁷²

That the Orangist view of politics and of the (new) ideas of the True Freedom were widely shared and became the dominant opinion in the public debate suggests that Orangism should not be considered an inferior political ideology. The Orangists successfully tore down the failed experiment of the True Freedom.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 11.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 15–16.

⁷⁰ *Bedenkingen*, Knuttel 10265, 6. Cf. Blom, "Vrijheid," 133.

⁷¹ Klashorst, "De ware vrijheid, 1650–1672," 177.

⁷² *Den Bedrogen*, Van Alphen 366, 8.

The Destruction of the True Freedom

Orangist propaganda that appeared in the summer of 1672 had two goals: renewed obedience to government and the complete destruction of the True Freedom. Most citizens and a large number of independent pamphleteers could agree with the latter, but they had more difficulty accepting the former, for they were not very willing to forgive and forget. From the political news that was published in this period the public distilled another message. There were suspect regents. And there was a suspect political ideology. The suspect regents were those who followed the suspect ideology. This belief did little to promote unity and a renewed obedience to government. Between 8 July and 20 August, the day of the murder of Johan and Cornelis de Witt, riots broke out in most cities in Holland, Zeeland and Friesland. One commentator aptly noted, "We thought that peace and calm would return after the appointment of his Highness, but it appears that de *narreposten van Jan-Hagel* are only getting started".⁷³ The theoretical basis of the True Freedom had already been undermined; now its practical props would be removed. Motivations for these riots differed. Suspicions of treason played their part. One banner of the city militia in Delft harboured English and Irish, giving some citizens grounds to believe that their houses were "filled with French" and causing a riot to break out.⁷⁴

William's role changed after he had been appointed stadholder. He became a possible arbiter between fighting parties, in this case between riotous citizens and (local) government. On 6 August, Godard Adriaen van Reede van Amerongen described this new role in pointing to Amsterdam. Although citizens and local government still communicated, their diametrically opposed positions led them to (wilfully) misinterpret each other's arguments. Both sides presented complaints and grievances, but "who was to decide on these grievances, besides the prince of Orange?"⁷⁵ Citizens who aimed petitions at their local governments now also sent copies to William. Overnight, the new stadholder had become the Solomon of Dutch politics.

⁷³ *Den Politiquen Mantel*, Knuttel 10292.

⁷⁴ Cf. *Uyt Rotterdam, den 19 Aug* (1672), Tiele 6100; Gonnet, *Briefwisseling tusschen de gebroeders Van der Goes. Tweede Deel*, 396–402; Valkenier, *'t Verwerde Europa*, 739–740; Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 153.

⁷⁵ Japikse, *Correspondentie van Willem III en van Hans Willem Bentinck*, 85.

Middelburg

Aegidius Maillaert, a lawyer, guild member and member of the city militia of Middelburg, could not see what he had done wrong. He, accused of starting a riot? The magistrates of the largest city in Zeeland had a different perspective. Their accusation against Maillaert appeared on 30 June in a publication that was spread and read aloud by criers all over town. Maillaert, it said, had tried to start a riot with his slanderous talk. The publication was nailed to the doors of public places, and the regents from Middelburg sent a copy to the prince of Orange, just to be sure.⁷⁶

Maillaert willingly admitted that he had spread some news in town. Most importantly, he had told his fellow citizens that their regents had agreed to sign a capitulation to France.⁷⁷ But this was not slander; it was the truth. How could he have remained silent? According to Maillaert, his love for “religion, freedom and the fatherland” had forced him to spread this news over the entire city. Maillaert had also called his banner to arms in order to defend the city against the French. The city militia had chosen eight delegates – four merchants, three ship-owners and Maillaert (who also spoke for the guilds) – to represent them.⁷⁸ They wrote down their demands in a petition that they offered their government on 7 July.⁷⁹ The demands – seventeen in total – mostly addressed government accountability. The regents publicly agreed to many of the demands, but they also wrote to the prince of Orange claiming that Maillaert was causing sedition in the city and had tried to remove several regents from office.⁸⁰

The relationship between citizens and governors deteriorated with every passing day. After one of the mayors had yelled that the citizens were not “capable” of politics, riots broke out. A pamphleteer described this situation: “my pen cannot provide enough ink, to describe the bitterness between these two parties”.⁸¹ Citizens were angry because the magistrates had not met their demands despite promising to do so.⁸² According to an

⁷⁶ A. Mailleart and R. Maertens, *Apologie Wegen den Advocaet Aegidius Mailleart* (1672), Knuttel 10180, 1; Colenbrander, *Bescheiden uit vreemde archieven*, II, 180.

⁷⁷ Mailleart, *Apologie*, Knuttel 10180, 1–2.

⁷⁸ Roorda, *Partijen Factie*, 221.

⁷⁹ *Coppye*, Knuttel 10159.

⁸⁰ Cf. Citters, *Artyckelen*, Tiele 6081; *Coppye*, Knuttel 10159; *Middelburgh ingenomen*, Tiele 6085; Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 756.

⁸¹ *Brief uit Middelburgh*, Tiele 6094; Colenbrander, *Bescheiden uit vreemde archieven. Tweede deel*, 143–160; A. van Citters, *Aen de Ed. Achtbare Heeren Burgemeesters, Schepenen ende Raden der Stadt Middelburgh in Zeelandt* (1672), Van der Wulp 4802.

⁸² Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 757.

anonymous pamphleteer, the inhabitants had lost all respect for their magistrates. He referred to an incident in which mayor Pieter Duyvelaer was beaten up by a member of the city militia in front of the city hall.⁸³

On 21 July, matters escalated. After a rumour of a surprise attack by the French, some peasants fled to the city and headed for the city hall. These peasants started a riot that was quickly joined by the city militia and the rabble. The participants were, however, not of one mind. Militiamen and members of the rabble had started fighting each other on their way to the city hall. One militiaman shot a boy who had ripped his flag to pieces and the members of the militia were consequently bombarded with stones. The peasants actually stopped the rabble, "claiming that they were not there to plunder, but to change bad government".⁸⁴ There is much confusion about what happened next.⁸⁵ Several regents were taken from their houses and brought outside the city, where they were tortured and questioned and released only after they had agreed to meet the rioters' demands.⁸⁶

In the meantime, the prince of Orange intervened. He wrote a letter to the regents from Middelburg in which he stated that Maillaert had overstepped the boundaries of his position as representative of the citizens. The stadholder promised to help the regents and made sure that it was clear that if anyone was allowed to change government, that person was William himself.⁸⁷ The letter showed that the prince wanted to control the situation in Middelburg but also that he was far from it.

Maillaert published a pamphlet to answer this letter.⁸⁸ This pamphlet was paid for by several new regents who had come into office at the end of July. They knew exactly where their loyalty lay.⁸⁹ Maillaert hoped that "his highness would lend his ear to the accused as well as he had lent it to the accusers".⁹⁰ The lawyer repeated that he had not caused sedition at all and had never stood up against government. He had only tried to protect just government. In confirmation of the new role of the prince of Orange, Maillaert asked William "to act as his judge". The prince of Orange was to determine whether Maillaert had started a riot or whether he had tried to

⁸³ *Brief uit Middelburgh*, Tiele 6094.

⁸⁴ Valkenier, *'t Verwerde Europa*, 699–700, 757.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 758; *Brief uit Middelburgh*, Tiele 6094; *Middelburgh ingenomen*, Tiele 6085.

⁸⁶ Valkenier, *'t Verwerde Europa*, 758.

⁸⁷ *Middelburgh ingenomen*, Tiele 6085.

⁸⁸ Maillaert, *Apologie*, Knuttel 10180.

⁸⁹ Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 223.

⁹⁰ Maillaert, *Apologie*, Knuttel 10180, 1.

preserve the fatherland.⁹¹ The prince of Orange took his position as a judge in this case seriously – and changed sides. In September, he published a pamphlet stating explicitly that Maillaert had not caused sedition. On the contrary, he had acted for all the right reasons.⁹²

Riots and Publications

When Johan Kievit (1627–1692) entered Rotterdam in his boat on 9 July, two responses seemed possible. In the first scenario, local government would arrest him and throw him into prison, where he would await his death sentence. In a second scenario, the Rotterdammers would welcome him with joy because the riots against his old adversaries would make him the city's prodigal son. That the reality followed the second scenario was partly a consequence of the pamphlet that Kievit had spread in Rotterdam before his arrival.

Johan Kievit had been banned from the Republic in 1666, after he and fellow Orangists Ewout van der Horst and Henry Buat had been unmasked for plotting a coup. This discovery had been accidental. Buat, who often travelled to England to collect diplomatic letters for Johan de Witt, mixed up two letters by mistake. He took the diplomatic letter home and left the letter with the details of the coup on the desk of Johan de Witt. The grand pensionary was shocked (Arlington was part of the plans) and had Buat instantly arrested. Van der Horst and Kievit had already fled for England when Buat confessed. Buat was beheaded in The Hague, while Van der Horst and Kievit were banned from the Republic for the rest of their lives.⁹³

To make his return during the summer of 1672 as smooth as possible, Kievit aimed his pamphlet not at local government but at “all generous lovers, faithfull citizens and pious supporters of the fatherland and of his highness, the prince of Orange.”⁹⁴ Kievit sought the support of the riotous citizens in Rotterdam so he could immediately manoeuvre himself into the position of opposition leader. His plan worked. The perfectly timed arrival of the formerly banned regent was celebrated in the streets. According to Joachim Oudaen, “his hands were kissed.”⁹⁵ The riotous

⁹¹ Ibid., 4.

⁹² Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 223.

⁹³ Israel, *De Republiek*, 856.

⁹⁴ Kievit, *Brief*, Knuttel 10148.

⁹⁵ Oudaen, “Dagverhaal”.

citizen Jan van Schrieck personally welcomed Kievit into the city and assured him that he was no longer in danger of facing either the scaffold or the sword.⁹⁶ Kievit's successes continued: he became a leader of the opposition and following massive purges of local governments, he was appointed to the office of pensionary of Rotterdam.

How was it possible that regents from Rotterdam, who had told their fellow regents in the States of Holland how to deal with riots on 8 July, had no say in their own city only three days later?⁹⁷ Kievit alone was not responsible for this sea change. Kievit hitched his star to the riotous movement. An anonymous pamphleteer described exactly who had rioted: "You mustn't think that the rabble plays master in these parts [...] because this work has been executed by respectable men, captains of the citizenry, the most powerful merchants and decent citizens, who had been joined by other citizens later on."⁹⁸ The tables had been turned on the Rotterdam government on 4 July, when these respectable citizens filed a petition wherein they demanded that several regents step down from office. The regents promised the petitioning citizens that they would give in to all demands, but the next day decided not to fulfil this promise. The citizens quickly found out about this betrayal.⁹⁹ New riots broke out. Several regents were thrown into prison by angry citizens. Other regents who were not suspect were sent to The Hague to meet the prince of Orange.¹⁰⁰ This riot resulted in a second petition from a group of "common citizenry", on 7 July.¹⁰¹ This time, the regents accepted all demands.¹⁰²

The citizens in Rotterdam remained in full arms until Sunday, 11 July. When the delegation that had visited the prince of Orange returned with a warning from William ordering all citizens in Rotterdam to obey their government, they went home.¹⁰³ At that moment, local governors in Rotterdam made a capital mistake: they immediately started to punish disobedient citizens. A carpenter who had called Pieter de Groot a "traitor of the fatherland" was to be executed immediately. Jan van Schrieck rushed to the city hall, where he told bailiff Verboom to release the carpenter

⁹⁶ Schrieck, "Jornaal," 8.

⁹⁷ Japikse, *Notulen*, 200.

⁹⁸ *Een brief uyt Rotterdam*, Knuttel 10153.

⁹⁹ Vroesen, *Waaragtig Verhaal*, 24.

¹⁰⁰ Schrieck, "Jornaal," 7–8.

¹⁰¹ Couwenhove, *Versoeck*, Knuttel 10145. Cf. Oudaen, "Dagverhaal".

¹⁰² Vroesen, *Waaragtig Verhaal*, 95, 107; Couwenhove, *Versoeck*, Knuttel 10145; Vroesen, *Waaragtig Verhaal*, 110.

¹⁰³ *Coppye Naer het Origineel* (1672), Knuttel 10152.

at once. Verboom refused and ordered a guard to aim his gun at Van Schrieck. Van Schrieck went down to the citizens and persuaded them to raid the city hall. The carpenter was sprung free. The little authority that had remained to the Rotterdam regents was washed away.¹⁰⁴

Events in Rotterdam served as kindling for the rest of the Republic. The regents who came together in the States of Holland on 11 July concluded that Kievit's pamphlet had influenced the riots that had flared up all over the Republic.¹⁰⁵ They were not wrong. Under the influence of the rapid distribution of news and comments, riotous movements became intertwined, leading to the formation of a single oppositional riotous movement. On 9 July, citizens in Amsterdam knew what Kievit had written in Rotterdam the previous day. Only few days after the event, the Amsterdammer Lucas Watering knew exactly why citizens in Middelburg had revolted.¹⁰⁶ Pamphlets not only incited citizens to move towards city hall, they also shaped the dynamic of riots, as is evident from Rotterdam and cities such as Middelburg. We can truly speak of a wave of revolts that flooded the Republic. Still, it would be wrong to assume that pamphleteers simply told citizens what to do. The relationship between publication and event was far more complicated. At times, for example, citizens were unwilling to believe what they read.¹⁰⁷

By the summer of 1672, regents took both citizens and their publications seriously. Petitions were referred to increasingly often in political meetings, including the States of Holland, and more significantly, regents debated and resolved grievances that had been addressed in petitions. The deputies from Rotterdam who claimed during the meeting in the States of Holland that all negotiations with the enemy should be terminated at once were responding directly to the demands of the citizens who had petitioned and rioted in the preceding weeks. Rotterdam declared it preferred to die with the "dagger in hand" than to "fall into slavery or accept infamous demands".¹⁰⁸ On 8 July, Dordrecht thought that the solution to the problem of riotous citizens was to "inform the citizenry about the benefits and deficits of the state to give them contentment".¹⁰⁹ The quick dissemination of news gave local events a 'national' resonance.

¹⁰⁴ Schrieck, "Jornaal," 9–10.

¹⁰⁵ Japikse, *Notulen*, 204.

¹⁰⁶ Gebhard, "Een dagboek uit het rampjaar 1672," 61, 67; Harms, "Handel in Letteren"; Salman, "Het nieuws op straat".

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Harline, *Pamphlets*; Mendle, "News and the Pamphlet Culture".

¹⁰⁸ Japikse, *Notulen*, 176.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 205.

One pamphleteer summarized the situation: “Look at the people roaming about, buying letters [...] rich and poor, no one tries to haggle, everyone wants to read what is going on”.¹¹⁰ Another pamphleteer described the popular force at that time as citizens from Holland who “requested with strong petitions that they would be informed about the political resolutions, state of finances and fortifications by their delegates, so they would be more at ease that the state was governed correctly”.¹¹¹

It is one thing to petition, another to riot, and another yet to kill a politician. Although the route to the murder of the De Witts will be explained in detail in the next chapter, at this point we should note how pamphleteers who had successfully turned the light on the adherents of the True Freedom started to focus on several individuals in July 1672. More and more often Johan de Witt was portrayed in popular publications as the centre of all that was evil.

The “Staetkundige Machiavel”

The beginning of the campaign against the person of Johan de Witt – his office was never attacked – can be determined quite precisely. According to De Witt himself, his bad reputation in the summer of 1672 was initiated by the pamphlet *Waerschouwinge aen alle edelmoedige en getrouwe Inwoonderen van Nederlandt*, published in the wake of the appointment of the prince of Orange as stadholder.¹¹² This pamphlet was an anthology of all the popular slanders and accusations against De Witt, starting with attempts on the life of the prince of Orange in his cradle and ending with De Witt’s attempts to sell the country to France in 1672.¹¹³

One accusation bothered De Witt more than all the others: that the grand pensionary had stolen public funds. Most probably De Witt understood that even were he to account for every penny, this accusation could never disappear. De Witt wrote to the prince of Orange on 12 July and to the States of Holland on 20 July complaining about the pamphlet.¹¹⁴ “Normally there was only one way to refute a slanderous pamphlet: by ignoring it”, wrote De Witt, but this time he could not follow this advice,

¹¹⁰ *Op het verlaten van de Stad Groeningen*, Tiele 6026.

¹¹¹ *Deductie*, Knuttel 10380.

¹¹² Japikse, *Brieven van Johan de Witt. Vierde Deel*, 393; Worp, *De Briefwisseling van Constantijn Huygens*, 306–307.

¹¹³ *Waerschouwinghe Aen alle Edelmoedige en getrouwe Inwoonderen van Nederlandt* (1672), Knuttel 10346.

¹¹⁴ *Waerschouwinghe*, Knuttel 10346.

because the accusation that he had stolen tax money had been believed and repeated by many.¹¹⁵ The pamphlet had also appeared in verse form and peddlers could easily sing the accusations in the streets, making even people who could not read aware of the charges.¹¹⁶ According to Abraham de Wicquefort, the story that De Witt had stolen tax money had quickly become “le sens commun” in the Dutch Republic.¹¹⁷ De Witt denied the charge and asked the Delegated Council to prove his innocence by publishing a pamphlet stating that he had not stolen anything.¹¹⁸ On 23 July, the Delegated Council indeed published this declaration.¹¹⁹ Dordrecht, Johan de Witt’s home-city, even proposed offering a reward for catching the writer and printer of the pamphlet *Waerschouwinge*.¹²⁰

On 22 July the prince of Orange had answered De Witt’s letter of 12 July. The delayed response was not a coincidence. Constantijn Huygens the Elder had even advised the prince of Orange not to respond at all, because to do so would “upset the citizenry”.¹²¹ William did respond. He published a pamphlet in which he wrote that he himself had been subjected to pamphlet campaigns in the past, a reference to anti-Orangist pamphlet campaigns that had been orchestrated by Johan de Witt during the 1650s and 1660s. De Witt should not complain.¹²²

William’s letter has been seen as a knife in the back of Johan de Witt. It has been argued that William should have displayed disgust instead of understanding for the author of the *Waerschouwinge*.¹²³ And indeed, an all-out attack on Johan de Witt quickly unfolded. According to several pamphlets, the “Loevestein Faction” and their wicked plans were now finally “uncovered”.¹²⁴ A mock Lord’s Prayer started with the words “Our father who is in The Hague, you cast upon us plague after plague” and ended with the lines “we hope that by the citizen militia, you and the

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ *Waerschouwinghe*, Tiele 6249.

¹¹⁷ *Bericht van de Heer Raedt-Pensionaris Johan de Witt* (1672), Knuttel 10166.

¹¹⁸ Japikse, *Notulen*, 207.

¹¹⁹ Johan de Witt, *Extracten uyt de Resolutien van de Heeren Staten van Hollandt ende West-Vrieslant* (1672), Van der Wulp 4806. Cf. Japikse, *Notulen*, 156.

¹²⁰ Japikse, *Notulen*, 205.

¹²¹ Worp, *De Briefwisseling van Constantijn Huygens*, 306–307.

¹²² Japikse, *Notulen*, 233; Worp, *De Briefwisseling van Constantijn Huygens*.

¹²³ Gonnet, *Briefwisseling tusschen de gebroeders Van der Goes. Tweede Deel*, 401. Cf. Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 152; Japikse, *Johan de Witt*, 332; Rowen, *John de Witt*, 855; Troost, *Stadhouder-koning Willem III*, 93.

¹²⁴ *Echo van ’t Vaderlandt. Waer door eenige vande Louvesteynse Factie werden ontdeekt* (1672), Tiele 6264.

entire De Witt family are quickly removed from this place, to our honour and your disgrace".¹²⁵

It did not help De Witt that a combination of unforeseen circumstances and tactical error by the French had caused the foreign attack to halt in July. Several minor military successes could even be reported, attributed over-enthusiastically to the leadership of the prince of Orange. The pamphlet audience could read that Louis XIV had left for France on a whim, without telling his army what to do.¹²⁶ Far worse for the French, however, was the decision to release 20,000 Dutch prisoners of war because the French had no idea what to do with them.¹²⁷ Since Louis had taken 18,000 men back with him to France, the Dutch odds on the battlefield improved tremendously.¹²⁸

Johan de Witt was being driven ever deeper into a corner. Pamphleteers published every accusation they could come up with. The brothers De Witt had used the stolen tax money to flaunt their "splendour". Why pay taxes if that money was used only to promote the grandeur of these men? The brothers had "milked the Holland cow until it bled".¹²⁹ Moreover, they had tried to not only exclude but even kill the prince of Orange in the years between 1650 and 1672.¹³⁰ To emphasise that Johan de Witt (or "The Political Machiavel", as he was now termed) had tried to usurp political privileges that belonged to the prince of Orange, he was called "the Land Prince"; his brother Cornelis, who had taken part in the battle of Solebay, was called "the Water Prince".¹³¹ In the majority of such pamphlets, the prince of Orange was described as the antidote to these traitors.¹³²

As a result of this campaign, Johan de Witt resigned from office on 4 August, complaining that he was being held "personally responsible" for the foreign invasion. His final speech in the meeting of the States of Holland was published. De Witt resented the fact that the citizenry saw him as the prime responsible regent while technically, as he argued, he was not even a regent; he was merely "a servant of the state".¹³³ These were desperate words from a man who had little left to lose.

¹²⁵ *Mennist Vader Ons* (1672), Tiele 6267.

¹²⁶ *Vrankrijks Misnoegen*, Van der Wulp 4752.

¹²⁷ Fruin, *De oorlog van 1672*, 184; Cambier, *De jaren 1672 en 1673*, 38.

¹²⁸ Fruin, *De oorlog van 1672*, 189.

¹²⁹ Brillen, Tiele 6232, 4–5. Cf. Panhuysen, *De Ware Vrijheid*, 314.

¹³⁰ *Ontknoopinghe Vanden Valstrick* (1672), Knuttel 10355.

¹³¹ Brillen, Tiele 6232, 5; *Oprechte Vermeerderde Brillen*, Knuttel 10488, 3.

¹³² *Echo*, Tiele 6264.

¹³³ *Extract uyt de Resolutien van de Heeren Staten van Hollandt ende West-Vrieslandt* (1672), Knuttel 10179; Japikse, *Notulen*, 244.

The campaign against the brothers De Witt was successful. In mid-August, Arlington received a letter from the Dutch Republic saying that “the people doe generally believe at the present they have been betray’d by the de Witts and their party”.¹³⁴ Five days later, the people had responded to that presumed betrayal. The focus of their anger was not, however, Johan de Witt, but his brother.

¹³⁴ Colenbrander, *Bescheiden uit vreemde archieven. Tweede deel*, 174.

CHAPTER SIX

THE ASSASSINATION

Pamphlets paved the road that led to the assassination of Johan and Cornelis de Witt by a group of angry citizens in The Hague on 20 August 1672. A look at how political information spread helps us understand the tensions that had built up in the weeks preceding the murders and made murder seem the sensible option. Pamphlets show not only what motivated the participants, but also how various pamphleteers justified or condemned the murders for their own purposes. In these justifications one description of the assassination stands out above all others: it was an action by a collective body of citizens that had “executed the law” where the Court of Holland had proved incapable. This picture runs counter to the Orangist frenzy that historians have made of the event.

A Large Blonde Man and His Conspiracy

With an event as complex as the assassination of Johan and Cornelis de Witt, pinpointing causation is beyond our means. We cannot hold polls or interview the people who hit, kicked and shot at the De Witts. We can, however, look at what people were debating in the weeks preceding the murders and consider how these images and ideas relate to the events of 20 August. A utopia that did not include the De Witt brothers was sketched in this political atmosphere. The brothers’ “removal” would apparently end current problems.

To make sense of these publications, it is necessary to go back to 8 July, when “a large blonde man” came to see Cornelis de Witt at his home, where he lay in bed suffering from the reoccurring podagra that had forced him to leave the fleet, where he had been assisting Michiel de Ruyter during the previous few months.¹ This man, Willem Tichelaar, went into Cornelis’s bedroom. The conversation between the two men was short, lasting no more than fifteen minutes. After their talk, Tichelaar left the house. Five days later he had a rendezvous in Bodegraven with the prince of Orange, after which William went immediately to The Hague and

¹ Fruin, *De oorlog van 1672*; Panhuysen, *De Ware Vrijheid*, 357.



Fig 7. The assassination of Johan and Cornelis de Witt by Caspar Bouttats, Atlas van Stolk, Rotterdam 2480.

pressed charges against Cornelis de Witt. Tichelaar had apparently claimed that Cornelis had asked him to murder the prince of Orange in exchange for 30,000 guilders and a lucrative office. Cornelis countered by arguing that Tichelaar had proposed that he would kill the prince of Orange for money.² As a result of the accusations, both men were locked up on 23 July.³ Examinations started four days later.⁴

It has long been a tradition in Dutch historiography to claim that Tichelaar, who had a shady reputation (he had been accused of rape and pimping), lied about everything, that Cornelis was above suspicion and that the entire court case was a legal monstrosity.⁵ Recently, however, revisionist historians have argued that the court case against Cornelis de Witt was legitimate and Cornelis's innocence was far from proven.⁶ There are

² Kroon, *Jan de Witt contra Oranje*, 173–238; Zuiden, “Twee notariële acten,” 171–173; W. Tichelaar, *Waerachtigh Verhael* (1672), Tiele 6120; *Consideratien en Circumstantien* (1672), Tiele 6106.

³ Japikse, *Notulen*, 240.

⁴ Rowen, *John de Witt*, 864–873.

⁵ Ibid.; Fruin, *De oorlog van 1672*, 203.

⁶ L. Panhuysen and J. Zijlman, “Een beladen proces,” in *Spiegel Historiae* 38 (2003).

several reasons to believe that the interrogation of Cornelis was indeed justified. First of all, although Cornelis had claimed in his statement that he did not know the man who came to see him, in reality, he had known Tichelaar.⁷ Cornelis also stated that after Tichelaar's visit he had immediately called for the secretary of the Dordrecht magistrate, Arend Muys van Holy; Van Holy testified, however, that Cornelis had told him about the visit in a by-the-way fashion during a meeting held for altogether different reasons. De Witt had committed perjury. And there is more. If Tichelaar had planned to set up Cornelis, why did he wait five days before going to see the prince of Orange? Why did Cornelis de Witt not press charges immediately after Tichelaar offered to kill the prince? (Cornelis argued that the case lay outside his jurisdiction, but as it concerned high treason, he should have handed it over to the Court of Holland immediately. He was an accomplice simply by merit of neglecting to do so.) Lastly, and perhaps crucially, Tichelaar's case proved to be solid by the judicial standards of the time. After questioning by the court, he was released. After the first round of investigations, Cornelis found himself in a particularly painful situation. Normally, a regent could only be prosecuted when two other citizens of "immaculate behaviour" pressed charges. In this case, however, since the charge was high treason, an enquiry had to be carried out, whatever the circumstances. Cornelis would be investigated no matter what.⁸ As was normal for elite suspects, Cornelis was brought to the Gevangenpoort in The Hague. He would never again leave that city.

Demonisation

For pamphleteers who had earlier argued that the men of the True Freedom should be held responsible for the misery in the Dutch Republic, the arrest of Cornelis de Witt was like a red flag to a bull.⁹ Pamphlets started pouring out on the day of Cornelis's arrest. The author of the pamphlet *Copye Uyt den Haegh*, supposedly a letter containing news to his cousin, claimed that Pieter de Groot had also been arrested in Lyon and that a servant of the prince of Orange had been promised 27,000 guilders if he killed the prince. "But who gave him the money was uncertain".¹⁰

⁷ Panhuysen, "Een beladen proces".

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Wicquefort, "Mémoires," 153.

¹⁰ *Copye Uyt den Haegh* (1672), Knuttel 10169a.

Johan de Witt, who was still recovering from the earlier attempt on his life by Jacob van der Graaf, now devoted all his time to the defence of his brother. He hired five lawyers to work non-stop on his brother's case.¹¹

Johan and his father, Jacob de Witt, recognised the damage that a vicious communication campaign could cause. Tichelaar was therefore arrested a second time, at the instigation of Jacob de Witt, who suspected that Tichelaar would "stir up the stupid man" if he stayed free.¹² The arrest of Tichelaar did not keep pamphleteers from speculating about the particulars of the case. When Cornelis was arrested on 23 July, several pamphlets claimed (again) that he had been put in jail for a fistfight with De Ruyter on the fleet and for cowardly escaping to his chambers during the sea battle at Solebay on 7 June.¹³ Johan de Witt hoped to counter these claims when he asked De Ruyter to publish a letter in defence of Cornelis. The admiral responded immediately and sent a draft of his letter to Johan de Witt before it was published.¹⁴ This led to the publication of *Brief Geschreven van den Admirael Michiel de Ruyter*.¹⁵ According to this pamphlet, there was a "brotherly unity and open friendship" between the two men and De Ruyter also swore that Cornelis had not been afraid to fight during the battle of Solebay. We do not know, however, whether the words we read are by De Ruyter or De Witt. According to the French news agent Abraham De Wicquefort, De Ruyter had put his signature to a prefabricated document.¹⁶

Failed Propaganda

The events that subsequently led from the imprisonment of Cornelis to the murder of the two brothers on 20 August were entangled with publications. These publications and events, and the reaction to them, show that the citizens in The Hague were ready for murder long before 20 August. Pamphlets played a large part in preparing the mood.

On 7 August, supporters of Cornelis produced a pamphlet that was meant to discredit Tichelaar in as many ways as possible.¹⁷ Cornelis's

¹¹ Japikse, *Brieven van Johan de Witt*. Vierde Deel, 414–417.

¹² Rowen, *John de Witt*, 864–873.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ M. de Ruyter, *Edele Groot Mogende Heeren* (1672), Knuttel 10181.

¹⁶ Wicquefort, "Mémoires," 154. Cf. *Leger-Praetje*, Knuttel 10603, 6.

¹⁷ *Consideratien*, Tiele 6106. Cf. J. de Witt, *Requeste, Wegens de Huys-vrouwe ende Vrunden van Cornelis de VVitt* (1672), Knuttel 10185.

lawyers had gathered 245 grounds for his immediate release. Most of these reasons involved discrediting Tichelaar, who was portrayed as an “infamous person and a well-known scoundrel” who had planned to kill the prince of Orange.¹⁸ They also published a petition in which the main argument was that Cornelis should not be tortured.¹⁹ The result was a disaster. Cornelis was not released, Tichelaar remained free, Cornelis was tortured. What can explain this communicative failure on the part of the family De Witt?

It turned out they were just bad propagandists. Their pamphlet *Consideratien En Circumstantien* is a fine example of Johan de Witt's limited feeling for propaganda for large audiences. This publication was splattered with Latin phrases and legal jargon. This tone may have been a conscious choice; perhaps the pamphlet was meant to influence not a popular audience, but the judges. If so, it made some serious errors. It claimed, for example, that Cornelis and Tichelaar had never met.²⁰ The judges already knew from the hearings of 27 July that this was not true. So what are we to make of this pamphlet? If its goal was to influence a large audience, it was too difficult to understand and it did not make the arguments that it could. At sixteen pages, length was in this case not the problem, although it seems that Johan de Witt thought a shorter pamphlet would have more effect. One week after the publication of the *Consideratien En Circumstancien*, a two-page summary was published, but it was equally difficult and had little or no influence.²¹ The pamphlet was not suited to any one specific audience because it tried to talk to all of them.

Johan de Witt was well aware that the tide had turned on him and his family. He foresaw political difficulties in the changed relationship between rulers and ruled and used the court case involving his brother to warn all the groups involved – citizens, judges and regents – about the catastrophe for which, in his eyes, they were heading. At the end of *Consideratien En Circumstantien* De Witt wrote, “If the judges will agree with Tichelaar, not one of the regents or inhabitants of this Republic who falls, or will fall, on the wrong side of the citizenry, will be certain of his honour, life, or goods.”²² De Witt appealed to every member of the Dutch political system, claiming that popular opinion could not have the last

¹⁸ *Consideratien*, Tiele 6106, 9.

¹⁹ De Witt, *Requeste*, Knuttel 10185.

²⁰ *Consideratien*, Tiele 6106, 4.

²¹ *Gesien by den onder-gheschreven*, Knuttel 10187 ed. (1672).

²² *Consideratien*, Tiele 6106, 16.

vote. The citizenry as a political public was not, in De Witt's opinion, the political court of appeal that was described in oppositional publications; it was the *multitudo bestialis*. His appeal was muffled in his dense judicial tract and did not reach or convince a large enough part of the audience to be of any value to his case.

Successful Propaganda

Where the De Witt propaganda had some difficulties in finding the right tone, oppositional propaganda excelled and held a firm grip on the middle ground of public opinion in the weeks preceding the murders. The author of the pamphlet *Extract Uyt een Brief uyt 's Gravenhage* analysed the situation correctly when he wrote that support for De Witt during these weeks kept falling, while support for the prince of Orange only grew.²³ Perhaps unintentionally, the pamphleteer had disclosed another important trend. The issue at hand had ceased to be whether Willem Tichelaar or Cornelis de Witt had plotted to murder the prince of Orange. In fact, Tichelaar was no longer an issue in oppositional pamphlets published in the first weeks of August. Amongst the hundreds of reasons for Cornelis's murder that appeared in print after the massacre, Tichelaar was mentioned only three times.²⁴ For oppositional pamphleteers, the battle between Cornelis de Witt and the prince of Orange (and not Tichelaar) had begun. For the pamphlet audience, Cornelis de Witt had tried to kill the prince of Orange and had already been found guilty of high treason (*Crimen Laese Majestatis*). The question was no longer whether he did it, but what to do with him. Some peasants from Hellevoetsluis set an example when they went searching for Cornelis in order to kill him.²⁵ On 29 July, a pamphlet was spread in Amsterdam that read "Orange above, De Witt under, whoever thinks differently, hit him with thunder".²⁶

Johan and Cornelis de Witt vigorously denied that any troubles existed between the two brothers and the prince of Orange. In the pamphlet *Brief uyt 's Gravenhage*, its author claimed that Johan de Witt had always governed well and that he had followed Cicero's axiom, "let the welfare of

²³ *Extract Uyt een Brief uyt 's Gravenhage* (1672), Knuttel 10183.

²⁴ *Colloquium Ofte een Wonderlijcken Droom van Dromo Phileitairos* (1672), Knuttel 10492; *Sententie*, Knuttel 10409, 6; *Soo kroont haer 't los geval* (1672), Zijlstra 2006.

²⁵ Japikse, *Notulen*, 222.

²⁶ *Louys Gulde Hartjens Dag* (1672), Knuttel 10337, 8.

the people be the supreme law".²⁷ According to the pamphleteer, Johan de Witt had always let the interest of the Republic prevail over his own interest. He recorded, "It seems impossible to me to feel angrily about this man". Furthermore, a fight with the prince of Orange was nonsensical because "the stadholder of Holland and the grand pensionary had always stood peacefully together". The middle ground of political propaganda had indeed changed since the 1650s and 1660s. De Witt's anti-Orangist policies were cast away – and ignored – by his own pamphleteers.²⁸

This position must have been perceived as stretching the argument, even for firm supporters of the True Freedom. The pamphlet had little success. During the next few days, pamphleteers suggested that Cornelis, and perhaps also Johan, should be severely punished for their treason. These pamphlets were received with wide enthusiasm. On 11 August news was spread in Rotterdam that Cornelis de Witt would be beheaded the following Friday.²⁹ Whether this punishment would involve a massacre at the hands of the citizens or whether Cornelis would be sentenced to death by the Court was left open to interpretation.

The author of *Bysondere Speculatien* addressed Johan de Witt when he wrote, "You have tried to save your brother from death. Montbas was perhaps successful, with the help of De Groot, but you high white councilor shall fail. The citizenry will no longer be impoverished. They have tolerated your self-interest for a long time. Now, we will destroy this traitor".³⁰ He added that as a consequence of his "inherited virtue", the prince of Orange was the most capable person to clean up the mess that these self-interested men had left. Another pamphleteer described how the treason should be interpreted: "A Jew sells his God, a Scot sells his king. But these [regents] sell themselves, their souls, wives, children and houses, state, freedom, truth, people, they kill all".³¹ The author of *Aanspraak aan Kornelis de Wit* wrote, "That guy [Cornelis] first has to be made a foot shorter. For by his death, we will be saved from desperation".³² One pamphleteer wrote that the adherents of True Freedom "must be removed from office and cleaned up".³³ The poet Jan Zoet claimed that after John

²⁷ *Brief uyt 's Gravenhage Knuttel* 10281, 15–16.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ GAR, 1.01, 1113.

³⁰ J.C.C., *Bysondere Speculatien op den Staet* (1672), Van der Wulp 4932.

³¹ *Ronde Waerheydt Knuttel*, 10222, 10.

³² *Aanspraak aan den Gestrengen Heer Kornelis de Wit Ruwaardt van Putten In zijn Gevangenis* (1672), Knuttel 10391.

³³ *Huysmans-Praetje*, Knuttel 10282.

the Baptist and Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, it was now time for the third Johan to die.³⁴ One pamphleteer suggested “removing De Witt from his throne” and agreed with those who wanted to “break his neck”;³⁵ another that it be checked whether Johan and Cornelis de Witt were “red on the inside”.³⁶

A subtler argument was made in the pamphlet *Een Sociniaensche Consultatie*, which appeared on the market during the first two weeks of August. The two characters in the pamphlet, Jan and Arent, represented Johan de Witt and Arent Sonmans, a regent from Rotterdam. Jan had noticed that Cornelis had been locked up in the prison where Henry Buat had been held captive before being sentenced to death for his attempt on Johan de Witt's life. Jan shivered, “Which makes me fear that he will go Buat's way”.³⁷ In the first six pages of the pamphlet both men agreed that they had been treated wrongly these last few months. In the last part of the pamphlet, however, the characters turned on each other. Jan argued that Arent had been personally responsible for all the misery that was bestowed on him. “You, who preferred France to prince, have brought this on yourself, I do not believe that the citizens will allow you ever to fill an office again.”³⁸ He advised Arent to resign all his offices because otherwise the citizens would kill him. Arent replied in a similarly vicious tone, “Who could ever have thought that such a man [Cornelis] would prove guilty of being a damned murderer of princes? [...] The blood of Buat cries for revenge”. In the end, both characters realised that they had to flee the Republic if they wanted to survive. Jan proposed joining a Socinian convent and disappearing.³⁹

Some of the pamphlets that incited murder did not include Johan in their sights. One pamphleteer compared Cornelis de Witt to Buat, who had been accused of *Crimen Laese Majestatis* and sentenced to death.⁴⁰ The pamphleteer labelled Cornelis de Witt “a betrayer of the fatherland”, and since Buat and Van der Graaf had been sentenced to death, what punishment should Cornelis receive?⁴¹ The pamphleteer hoped, however, that Johan de Witt would prove innocent.⁴²

³⁴ J. Zoet, *De Sprekende Toonbanck, Aen de Verkofte Hollander* (1672), Knuttel 10360.

³⁵ *Een Sociniaensche Consultatie*, Knuttel 10341.

³⁶ *Brillen*, Tiele 6232, 8.

³⁷ *Een Sociniaensche Consultatie*, Knuttel 10341.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Appendix*, Knuttel 10324, 6.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴² *Ibid.*

Royal Propaganda

Anonymous pamphlets had already argued that the adherents of the True Freedom should be held responsible, and punished accordingly, for the state the Republic was in. The tone of the debate took a new turn when Charles II wrote a letter in which he argued along the same lines.⁴³ That letter, addressed to the prince of Orange, had been written at the end of July and delivered to William by Godard Adriaan van Reede. On 28 July, the prince sent the letter to his propagandist Gaspar Fagel, who introduced it into the meeting of the States of Holland on 29 July.⁴⁴ It was not published, however, until 15 August, and this delay was no coincidence.

The message that Charles II spread was short, devious and deadly effective. Charles claimed that he and Louis XIV shared an everlasting love for the prince of Orange. However, they both hated the "Loevestein Faction" that had caused this war between the three states. If the Dutch people would acknowledge their mistaken ways by replacing the Loevestein Faction and restoring the prince of Orange to the authority and dignities of his ancestors, a quick peace would be the result.⁴⁵ The letter created an even more hostile atmosphere in already explosive circumstances. The wickedness (or beauty) of the strategy was the anticipation that the withholding of the letter created. An anonymous correspondent wrote, "[The letter] was published to make those who recently governed more hated by the citizenry".⁴⁶ In the pamphlet *Een Sociniaensche Consultatie*, the character Jan said, "The letter is kept a secret, but some tradesmen have already sent to England for a copy".⁴⁷ Anticipation of Charles's words created a buzz. After publication, their effects were noticeable immediately. Abraham de Wicquefort even claimed that the letter had caused the murders and that those who published it had only one motivation: to unleash upon the men of the True Freedom "la rage du peuple".⁴⁸

⁴³ *Missive Van Sijn Majesteyt den Koningh van Groot Brittanje, Aen Sijn Hoogheyt den Heere Prince van Oranje* (1672), Knuttel 10172.

⁴⁴ Fruin, "Willem III en zijn geheime onderhandelingen met Karel II van Engeland in 1672," 112; *Missive*, Knuttel 10172.

⁴⁵ *Missive*, Knuttel 10172.

⁴⁶ Colenbrander, *Baltische Archivalia* ('s-Gravenhage, 1909), 128.

⁴⁷ *Een Sociniaensche Consultatie*, Knuttel 10341.

⁴⁸ Wicquefort, "Mémoires," 131; Fruin, "Willem III en zijn geheime onderhandelingen met Karel II van Engeland in 1672," 112; Geyl, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse stam*, 89–91. Cf. *Eenvoudig Schuijt-praetje*, Knuttel 10472; *Oprechte Vermeerderde Brillen*, Knuttel 10488, 6; Gebhard, "Een dagboek uit het rampjaar 1672," 85; Japikse, *Notulen*, 253.

Although the letter has received a fair share of scholarly attention, there remains some debate over why it was published on 15 August. Historians agree that this was not a random publication date. That day the prince of Orange paid a visit to Amsterdam, the city that had refused to invite him on 8 July and where new riots had broken out on 12 August. According to Adriaan van der Goes, it was suspected that Amsterdam would “surrender if the French would attack”, while a correspondent of Arlington wrote on 14 August that everyone in the Dutch Republic agreed that if Louis XIV were to ride with five hundred horses on The Hague and with two thousand on Amsterdam, the province of Holland would be lost.⁴⁹ This suggests that William’s trip was an effort to “calm down the people”.⁵⁰ Also, on 14 August The States of Holland had proposed that the prince of Orange be given *pleine pouvoir* (the power to negotiate without consultation) in negotiations with England. Since Amsterdam had been the city that had objected the loudest and most successfully to earlier negotiations with England and France, the publication of Charles’s letter could also be seen as a nudge that would push Amsterdam over to the Orangists. Amsterdam needed some persuasion to commit to the Orangist cause and what better way than a recommendation from the English king himself?⁵¹

Moreover, the letter was published just as a rumour was spreading that Cornelis de Witt had tried to escape from prison in The Hague.⁵² This news was supposedly communicated by “Orangist agents”.⁵³ Several citizens gathered in front of the Gevangenpoort, where they demanded to see Cornelis. After Cornelis had been forced to parade in front of the window several times, the roused-up emotions calmed down somewhat, but several companies of city militia decided to guard the prison round the clock.⁵⁴

According to a news story from The Hague published three days later, the “citizens and peasants in the entire country are infuriated with this De Witt [Cornelis]. If he is released, we will hear unimaginable things from The Hague”.⁵⁵ Dutchmen throughout the country followed De Witt’s case with keen eyes. Therefore, we should not be surprised to learn that citizens

⁴⁹ Colenbrander, *Bescheiden uit vreemde archieven. Tweede deel*, 174.

⁵⁰ Gonnet, *Briefwisseling tusschen de gebroeders Van der Goes. Tweede Deel*, 396.

⁵¹ Gebhard, “Amsterdamsche aantekeningen uit 1672,” 241.

⁵² Colenbrander, *Bescheiden uit vreemde archieven. Tweede deel*, 182–183.

⁵³ Rowen, *John de Witt*, 864–873; Colenbrander, *Bescheiden uit vreemde archieven. Tweede deel*, 183.

⁵⁴ *Afbeelding, en waerachtigh Verhael* (1672), Knuttel 10196. Cf. Rowen, *John de Witt*, 864–873.

⁵⁵ Colenbrander, *Bescheiden uit vreemde archieven. Tweede deel*, 182–183.

from Amsterdam and Rotterdam were present at the scene of the murder on 20 August.

The Torture

Two days after Charles's letter was published, the Court of Holland had Cornelis de Witt tortured in an effort to make him confess his plans to murder the prince of Orange.⁵⁶ Christiaan Corstiaansz, the executioner, made a public statement that Cornelis had been "severely" tortured, although later, for reasons unknown, he changed this story and said that the torture had resembled "child's play" and that he would have undergone it himself for "a glass of wine or half a rijksdaalder". Years later, he described the torture in a letter to Cornelis's widow.⁵⁷ Cornelis had to undress, after which his shins were broken and the executioner asked him to confess. Cornelis replied that he could not confess to what he had not done. The executioner then hung a pendulum weight of fifty pounds from his toes. At that point, two members of the Court entered the room. Supposedly Cornelis yelled, "rip my body apart, you cannot get out what is not inside". The executioner ended the process by putting Cornelis on the rack and tightly binding three of his limbs until all blood had left his extremities. Cornelis was still recovering three days later.⁵⁸ He had not confessed to anything and now, on the morning of 20 August, he would receive his verdict. As that verdict was read, a note stuck to the door of the New Church reminded people in The Hague one last time of the discussions of the preceding weeks: "Beelzebub writes from Hell, that Kees [Cornelis] de Witt shall come soon. He awaits him in short days, but first he has to be beheaded. And his brother is a scoundrel as well".⁵⁹

Explaining a Murder

Historians have explained the events of 20 August in two ways. On one hand, these events are seen as the apotheoses of an ideological struggle.⁶⁰ As such, the assassination was a spontaneous result of party political

⁵⁶ Cf. Rowen, *John de Witt*, 864–873.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Gedenkwaardige Stukken*, Van der Wulp 4956; L. Wichers, "Bijzonderheden betreffende den moord der gebroeders De Witt," *Haagsch Jaarboekje* 6, no. 1 (1894): 98–101.

⁵⁹ L. van Gemert, "De Haagsche Broeder-Moord: Oranje ontmaskerd," *Literatuur* 1 (1984): 271.

⁶⁰ Gelder, "Schutterij en Magistraat in 1672," 58; Geyl, *Oranje en Stuart 1641–1672*, 331.

tensions in an outburst by an Orangist crowd. On the other hand, the events have been described as a complicated political conspiracy wherein the actions of only a few Orangist conspirators, who were, remarkably, absent during the murders, were all-important.⁶¹

Discussion about the possible involvement of the prince of Orange commenced immediately after the murders and has remained an obligatory point of debate for everyone interested in the event ever since.⁶² The scholarly tug of war over the prince's role in the murders began when the Rotterdam tile baker and pamphlet writer Joachim Oudaen proposed that the assassination had been a premeditated Orangist trap. Bernard Costerus, the regent from Woerden, fuelled this conspiracy theory a few years later when he wrote that "the prince of Orange had knowledge about what lingered in The Hague". According to Costerus, the prince had indeed been in Woerden on the morning of 20 August, but this had only been "an alibi [...] because he had been told that during the massacre of the brothers De Witt, the prince had been in The Hague incognito."⁶³

Both approaches remain interesting: the first because Orangist sentiment was one of the motivating factors for citizens to do what they did and the second because there exists some (questionable) evidence of a conspiracy. Nonetheless, a new approach to the murders is also called for, because in order to understand the murders, we must understand the murderers, which is impossible when either of the two orthodox explanations is adopted. Historians have been prone to describe the murderers as the rabble or as a lynch mob.⁶⁴ By describing them as a faceless mob and pointing at their bloodthirstiness, we have excused ourselves from explaining why these people did what they did. In fact, the murderers appear to be the opposite of a rabble. The murderers were citizens, including the most respectable citizens.

"But Now They Are Dead Men"

On 20 August, the Court of Holland read the sentence to Cornelis de Witt at half-past eight in the morning in the main room of the prison.⁶⁵ Cornelis

⁶¹ Panhuysen, *De Ware Vrijheid*, 456–457.

⁶² Rowen, *John de Witt*, 891–893.

⁶³ B. Costerus, *Historich verhaal ofte deductie van zaaken, raakende het formeren van de Republiek van Holland ende West-Vriesland, de veranderinge in de Regeringe, met den gevolge van dien zedert den jaare 1572* (Leiden, 1736), 234–236.

⁶⁴ T. Timmen, "Een Nederlandse lynchmassa. Twintig augustus 1672: de moord op Johan en Cornelis de Witt," *Intermediair* 35, no. 1 (1979).

⁶⁵ Rowen, *John de Witt*, 864–873.

had lost all his offices, was banned from the province of Holland and had to pay all court costs.⁶⁶ The sentence was extraordinary because Cornelis had not been charged with anything. He was, according to the document, simply condemned. There has been some speculation about the reason for the missing charge. Two options seem viable. Firstly, the punishment was predetermined by an Orangist conspiracy. Secondly, and this seems more likely, as the judges could not combine a charge of *Crimen Laesa Majestatis* with anything but a death sentence, they preferred to leave out the charge altogether.⁶⁷

Willem Tichelaar was acquitted on all counts. He was reimbursed for his expenses and released from prison.⁶⁸ This news spread through The Hague like wildfire. As soon as he had left prison, Tichelaar told every willing ear, especially those in the bar to which he went, that he had been wrongfully accused. "Men you can see now who was wrong. The court has set me free and reimbursed me for all expenses. They have spared Cornelis's life, and have only banished him. He will leave prison soon".⁶⁹ The content of Cornelis's sentence spread from mouth to mouth, and the verdict was published and for sale in The Hague within hours.

When the Rotterdam merchant Joachim Oudaen, who had travelled from Rotterdam to The Hague that morning, reached the jail at half-past nine, a large crowd had already gathered.⁷⁰ The citizens in this crowd felt betrayed by the sentence on Cornelis. Annetje Dircx, a woman living in The Hague and eyewitness of subsequent events, claimed that the citizens were not satisfied with the sentence and went to "execute justice" themselves.⁷¹ The citizens considered the sentence to be an example of injustice because if Tichelaar had been released without a conviction of any kind that could only mean that Cornelis had been guilty. Cornelis had to be punished according to the rules of justice.⁷² Given such a train of thought, an (Orangist) incitement to murder was hardly necessary.

⁶⁶ A. Pots, *Sententie, Van den Hove van Hollandt en West-Friesland* (1672), Knuttel 10188.

⁶⁷ Japikse, *Johan de Witt*, 340.

⁶⁸ Valkenier, *'t Verwerde Europa*, 763.

⁶⁹ Valkenier, *'t Verwerde Europa*, 764. Cf *Missive uyt 's Gravenhage, 1672* (1672), Tiele 6111; *Afbeelding*, Knuttel 10196.

⁷⁰ Oudaen, "Dagverhaal"; Overvelt, *Coppye*, Petit 3922.

⁷¹ Dircx, *Wonderlijke Doot*, Tiele 6116.

⁷² *Afbeelding*, Knuttel 10196.

City Militia

In the meantime, Johan de Witt received a message to come to the Gevangenpoort to collect his brother and pay whatever Cornelis owed the Court of Holland. This particular episode has caused a vicious debate among historians about whether or not Johan de Witt was lured into The Hague by Orangists. Joachim Oudaen was the first to hint at such a conspiracy.⁷³ As the crowd in front of the Gevangenpoort grew, the Delegated Council of the States of Holland, which was in session next door, decided to send for several companies of “the most trustworthy” city militia to keep the peace.⁷⁴ By the time that this message reached the militia, all banners had already come to arms on their own accord. Around noon, every citizen possessing a weapon was marching through town.⁷⁵ They were not, however, keeping the peace and hardly guarding anything. The city militia became part of the riot, instead of stopping it. Between ten-thirty and eleven, Johan and Cornelis wanted to go home.⁷⁶ Supposedly, a woman yelled to the city militia, “what the hell men, there come the traitors, drive them back, or hit them to death”.⁷⁷ The city militia told the brothers to return to their chambers or they would begin shooting.⁷⁸ The members of the States of Holland noticed that the city militia was not stopping the riot and requested that four companies of soldiers help guard the brothers De Witt.⁷⁹ This cavalry, under the command of Claude Tilly, arrived quickly and restored the peace for a while.

In the meantime, Hendrik Verhoeff, a tall, dark man and silversmith, told several men (including alderman Johan van Banchem) in an inn called The Swann that he had prayed to God that morning that he might kill the brothers De Witt.⁸⁰ The men went out to the prison, where Verhoeff acted as the ringleader of the riot.⁸¹ The magistrate of The Hague recognised the importance of Verhoeff and invited him to come to the city hall.

⁷³ Brummel, “Rondom Joachim Oudaan's Haagsche Broeder-moord”; Gemert, “De Haagsche Broeder-Moord,” 271–272. Cf. Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 765; Wicquefort, “Mémoires”; Japikse, *Johan de Witt*, 341.

⁷⁴ Overvelt, *Coppye*, Petit 3922; Japikse, *Johan de Witt*, 343.

⁷⁵ Overvelt, *Coppye*, Petit 3922.

⁷⁶ Gemert, “De Haagsche Broeder-Moord,” 272.

⁷⁷ Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 765.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 765.

⁸⁰ Wichers, “Bijzonderheden,” 102–112.

⁸¹ Japikse, *Johan de Witt*, 347.

According to the historian Nicolaas Japikse, all magistrates in The Hague took off their hats when Verhoeff entered the room.⁸² Verhoeff “boasted to the magistrate that he could give the hearts of the brothers De Witt to the city council within half an hour” and returned to the riotous crowd.⁸³ At that same moment, two delegates of the city of Delft in the States of Holland reported to the Delegated Council that ten thousand “farmers and rabble” from the surrounding villages were on their way to The Hague. This rumour spread through The Hague quickly.⁸⁴ Two of the four companies of cavalry were sent to guard the city gates.⁸⁵ Commander Tilly, who protested against this order, predicted “now the brothers De Witt are dead”.⁸⁶ At three o'clock, the cavalry left the scene.

The hundreds of citizens in front of the prison furiously debated what to do about the peasants on their way to invade The Hague. Several argued that the two brothers would certainly escape during the looming chaos. It was decided that something had to be done before The Hague descended into a bloodbath. One group of citizens wanted to take the two men to the city hall, where they could be guarded. A second group wanted to kill them immediately.⁸⁷ The latter group took the initiative and fired several shots at the door of the Gevangenpoort, to little effect. Verhoeff had some sledgehammers gathered to knock the doors down. At five-thirty in the afternoon a scared warden opened the door from the inside.⁸⁸ Approximately thirty citizens stormed upstairs to the chamber of Cornelis de Witt.⁸⁹ One of them urinated in Cornelis's shoes.⁹⁰ Johan and Cornelis de Witt were pushed outside, where they faced thousands of outraged people.⁹¹ The first blow was delivered shortly thereafter, and both brothers went down. Moments later several shots were fired. Johan and Cornelis de Witt had been killed.

⁸² Ibid., 348.

⁸³ Wichers, “Bijzonderheden,” 106; Gemert, “De Haagsche Broeder-Moord,” 272; Japikse, *Johan de Witt*, 348.

⁸⁴ *Missive uyt 's Gravenhage*, Tiele 6111; Gonnet, *Briefwisseling tusschen de gebroeders Van der Goes. Tweede Deel*, 403.

⁸⁵ Japikse, *Johan de Witt*, 349.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 766.

⁸⁸ Gemert, “De Haagsche Broeder-Moord,” 272; Wichers, “Bijzonderheden,” 107.

⁸⁹ Japikse, *Johan de Witt*, 349. Cf. Overvelt, *Coppye*, Petit 3922.

⁹⁰ Wichers, “Bijzonderheden,” 108.

⁹¹ Wicquefort, “Mémoires,” 167.

Finding a Killer among Murderers

The tendency to describe the murderers of Johan and Cornelis de Witt as rabble is based on questionable source material.⁹² One source, Michiel de Ruyter, was himself attacked by a group of citizens on 6 September and had every reason to think unfavourably of these men.⁹³ A number of anonymous pamphleteers claimed that the rabble was responsible for the massacre, but they had ulterior motives for doing so. The designation as rabble was used by these pamphleteers not to describe the social composition of the killers but to ensure that the audience knew exactly how the author thought about the murderers. In a similar tactic, Spinoza wanted to paint “ultimi barbarorum” on the place of the murders to give expression to his disgust. (He was stopped by his landlord, who was convinced that the philosopher would also be killed if the citizens found out who had painted the slogan.) Those who labelled the murderers rabble were not dividing their society into social categories but simply expressing their disgust.

Adriaan van der Goes explicitly mentioned that the rabble did not play a significant role that day. He had seen for himself that the murderers had been “the most important citizens such as silversmiths, cobblers and other decent citizens”.⁹⁴ The prince of Orange said something similar during the meeting of the States of Holland on Monday 22 August, two days after the tragedy. William explained why he did not want the murderers to be prosecuted. He did not know “how to proceed with vigour, because these murderers were the most respectable citizens. It was dangerous”.⁹⁵ More speculative – but also more spectacular – evidence was provided by Johan de Witt himself, whose last word, according to Petrus Valkenier, was “Burghers!”⁹⁶ The Norwegian diplomat Just Hoegh (1640–1694) wrote in a letter that the murders had been committed “ny de la populace oisive, maes des plus afferrés artisans de cette ville”.⁹⁷ Contemporary writers

⁹² For an exception to this rule see R. Dekker, *Holland in beroering. Oproeren in de 17e en 18e eeuw* (Baarn, 1982). For the rabble thesis see A.Th. van Deursen, *De last van veel geluk. De geschiedenis van Nederland 1555–1702* (Amsterdam, 2005); Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, 245; Troost, *Stadhouder-koning Willem III*; Rogier, “De vestiging van de Ware Vrijheid,” 17. Rogier had claimed in 1948 that citizens had been part of the murderous crowd but changed his mind for no apparent reason in 1954. L.J. Rogier, *Eenheid en scheiding. Geschiedenis der Nederlanden 1477–1813* (Utrecht/Antwerp, 1973).

⁹³ Prud’homme van Reine, *Rechterhand van Nederland*, 249–252.

⁹⁴ Gonnet, *Briefwisseling tusschen de gebroeders Van der Goes. Tweede Deel*, 406.

⁹⁵ Japikse, *Notulen*, 277.

⁹⁶ Valkenier, *t Verwerd Europa*, 767.

⁹⁷ Colenbrander, *Bescheiden uit vreemde archieven. Tweede deel*, 184.

agreed on the background of the murderers as well.⁹⁸ “The hands of citizens are covered in blood”, added a pamphleteer.⁹⁹

If those authors who called the murderers rabble were using a rhetorical device, those who deemed them “citizens” may have had similar intentions. Immediately after the murders, it would not necessarily have hurt one’s reputation to have been identified as part of the crowd that killed the brothers. To be sure about the identity of the killers, we need more evidence.

Proof is available. There are lists of men who claimed to have stood in the front rows during the massacre. People on this list were largely members of the city militia (mostly of the blue banner in The Hague), which meant that they were citizens and could even have been members of the group of guild masters and high army officials, which gives credibility to the prince of Orange’s claim that the murderers had been not only citizens, but respectable citizens.

Order in Disorder

When Johan and Cornelis stepped outside at six o’clock at night, they were hit, pushed, kicked and spat upon by the crowd.¹⁰⁰ According to eyewitnesses, “several thousands” were present.¹⁰¹ We know little about the sounds at the scene of the murder, but we can be sure that they were nothing like those at the first attempt on the life of Johan de Witt, when the four attackers had not said a word. Supposedly, the killers yelled the names of Buat and Van der Graaf.¹⁰²

Cornelis was killed immediately by a blow to the head.¹⁰³ Johan de Witt was also hit on the head, with a gun, sank to the ground, covered himself with his cloak, shouted “well men, well burghers!”, and was shot and

⁹⁸ Vroesen, *Waaragtig Verhaal*, 165. Cf. Gribbius, *D’Ontroerde Leeuw*, Knuttel 10526. Cf. *De Vast-Gekuypte Loevesteynsche Ton aen Duygen* (1672), Knuttel 10429; *De vertoonde Geest, van Joan de Wit, aen sijn Dochter, waer door sy van schrick gestorven is* (1672), Van der Wulp 4952; *Den Oprechten Patriot* (1672), Knuttel 10497.

⁹⁹ Vryling, *Het onbevleekte Wit*, Knuttel 10230, 13.

¹⁰⁰ *Sententie Van den generalen Hove van Nederlandt, Tegens Mr. Cornelis de Wit* (1672), Knuttel 10409, 7.

¹⁰¹ *D’Ydele Vlucht Vertoont in de Schielikke Dood van Kornelis en Jan de Wit* (1672), Knuttel 10419; *Missive uyt ’s Gravenhage, op den twintighsten Augusti 1672* (1672), Knuttel 10192.

¹⁰² *Missive uyt ’s Gravenhage*, Tiele 611; *Waerlijck verhael*, Knuttel 10463; Wichers, “Bijzonderheden,” 112. Cf. Valkenier, *’t Verwerde Europa*, 768.

¹⁰³ Wichers, “Bijzonderheden,” 110.

killed.¹⁰⁴ The killers yelled, “there lies the Perpetual Edict”.¹⁰⁵ The city militia stood in a half-moon around the brothers and shot the bodies several times.¹⁰⁶ Several men later claimed that they had delivered the final blow or shot the brothers.¹⁰⁷ Regardless of who fired the finishing shot, performed the last stab or gave the final blow, we can consider the murders of Johan and Cornelis de Witt a collective action by a group that knew what it was doing. After the brothers had been killed, their bodies were dragged to the Groene Zoodje, the place where criminals were usually executed. A sailor hung the bodies upside down from their ankles.¹⁰⁸

The murderers were not giving in to their blood lust when they subsequently cut the fingers, extremities and organs from the dead bodies; they were executing punishment in a way that was considered just and sensible in the early modern period. They were punishing in kind: an eye for an eye.¹⁰⁹ As Van der Goes wrote, “It was as if the murder was a lawful execution”.¹¹⁰ A pamphleteer had also noticed “the order in the disorder”.¹¹¹

Punishment in early modern history often resembled the crime that had been committed, and if this crime involved violence, retaliatory violence was seen as an example of justice. The Amsterdam criminal Jan van Velsen had robbed and murdered with a painted face. When he was sentenced to death in 1695, he was broken on the wheel with his face painted black.¹¹² Public punishment could include acts of torture and violence: tongues were pierced or slit, hands were cut off, bodies were decapitated

¹⁰⁴ Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 767; *Missive uyt den Haag* (1672), Tiele 6110.

¹⁰⁵ Wichers, “Bijzonderheden,” 110.

¹⁰⁶ Japikse, *Johan de Witt*, 353. Cf. Dirckx, *Wonderlijke Doot*, Tiele 6116.

¹⁰⁷ *Gedenkwaardige Stukken*, Van der Wulp 4956, 26–29; Panhuysen, *De Ware Vrijheid*, 457; J.W. van Sypesteyn, “De tegenwoordigheid van den admiraal Cornelis Tromp bij den moord aan de gebroeders de Witt gepleegd, den 20sten Augustus 1672,” *Geschiedkundige bijdragen* 2 (1865): 98; Vroesen, *Waaragtig Verhaal*, 165; Gebhard, “Een dagboek uit het rampjaar 1672,” 87–90; *Oprechte Vermeerderde Brillen*, Knuttel 10488, 11; *De Haegsche Anatomie*, Door Mr. Borrebagh (1672), Knuttel 10403, 3; Wicquefort, “Mémoires,” 166.

¹⁰⁸ *Colloquium*, Knuttel 10492; *Den Bedrogen*, Van Alphen 366, 11; *Eenvoudig Schuijpraetje*, Knuttel 10472; *Sententie*, Knuttel 10409, 6; Overvelt, *Copye*, Petit 3922; *Missive uyt den Haag*, Tiele 6110. Also see the diary of the Amsterdam merchant Isaac Pool on this episode. I would like to thank Jeroen Salman for allowing me to use the manuscript of the forthcoming edition of the diary of Isaak Pool. *Uit het Dagboek van de Amsterdamse koopman Isaac Pool* Signatuur KB 122 D 4: 1669. Cf. J. Salman, *Populair drukwerk in de Gouden Eeuw. De almanak als lectuur en handelswaar* (Zutphen: Waanders, 1999), 16, 170, 71, 309, 39; J. Salman, “Troebelen en tijdsordening. De actualiteit in zeventiende-eeuwse almanakken,” *De zeventiende eeuw* 17 (2001): 16.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. P. Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering* (Cambridge, 1984).

¹¹⁰ Gonnet, *Briefwisseling tusschen de gebroeders Van der Goes. Tweede Deel*, 406.

¹¹¹ *Waerlijk verhael*, Knuttel 10463, 14.

¹¹² Egmond, “Fragmentatie,” 11–13.

and disembowelled, corpses were quartered, body parts were borne off for public display and bodies dragged through the streets attached to a horse's tail. Moreover, crowds often took their victims to official places of execution as had the murderers of the De Witt brothers when they dragged the bodies to the Groene Zoodje.¹¹³ The pamphleteer who had earlier noticed the order in the disorder remarked on the significance of this place, the spot where usually "justice is done with the sword".¹¹⁴

At around half-past six at night, the ritual act of justice began. After their execution, the brothers were ready to receive their just punishment. The bodies, hanging upside down, were undressed. What happened next was later justified by various publicists. Firstly, the fingers of Johan de Witt's right hand, the hand that he had used to formulate the Perpetual Edict, were cut off.¹¹⁵ Next, their extremities were cut off, just as the cities and provinces had been cut off by the enemy because of their "bad government".¹¹⁶ Their ears were cut off because they had used these to plan several "deceitful schemes".¹¹⁷ Their noses were cut off because they had used the image of their noses as a sign of their splendour.¹¹⁸ Johan had sworn on the Perpetual Edict with his tongue, which therefore also had to come out.¹¹⁹ The hands were removed because the brothers had used these "to write unjust letters and steal tax money".¹²⁰ Their feet were chopped off because they had used these to go to godless meetings.¹²¹ The flesh was squeezed from their bodies in the same way as the citizenry had been squeezed by the war and the French progress across the Dutch Republic.¹²² The clothes were ripped from their bodies because many Dutchmen had had their clothes ripped off by the French and other enemies.¹²³ Finally, their bodies were ruined because the brothers De Witt had tried to ruin God's Church and the citizenry.¹²⁴ The term "ruined" referred to the fact that the penises of both men were removed and (along with other body parts) eaten by their murderers.¹²⁵ Around nine o'clock

¹¹³ Cf. Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, 162; Sawyer, *Printed Poison*, 45.

¹¹⁴ *Waerlijck verhael*, Knuttel 10463.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹¹⁶ *Sententie*, Knuttel 10409, 6–7.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *De Geest van Jan en Cornelis De Wit* (1672), Tiele 6308.

¹²⁰ *Sententie*, Knuttel 10409, 7.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Panhuysen, *De Ware Vrijheid*, 460.

at night, the hearts were cut from the bodies.¹²⁶ Together with the lungs, they were wrapped in a blanket to be sent to England, after which “their torsos were put on sticks like dead pigs”.¹²⁷ Justice had been done.

A Market Place of Body Parts

Commentators described the taking apart of the bodies in great detail, but one question stayed unanswered: what happened to the souls of the brothers? The author of *Graf-Schrift, van Johan de Wit gewesene Raadt-Pensionaris* had an idea: “Here he lies without his heart, hands, tongue, nose, feet and ears, that have been divided among the people, as he divided the cities. Here lies one part in the grave, surprisingly in peace, but where is the soul? That is taken care of by the devil.”¹²⁸ One chronicler claimed that the murderers went looking for the judges after they were finished with the brothers.¹²⁹ The judges had by that time long fled the scene. Around midnight, several friends of the brothers De Witt took down what was left of the bodies. They stored the remains in the house of Jacob van Beveren (1612–1676), lord of Zwijndrecht and brother-in-law of Johan de Witt, who was so scared that he initially refused them entrance to his home.¹³⁰

Whatever questions might remain about the details of the murders, there is some consensus that after the mutilation of the bodies, parts of them were sold and spread throughout the Republic. Hermanus Dirckx, who was part of the murderous crowd, got his hands on a piece of Johan de Witt’s shirt “and a certain gentlemen paid him four schellingen for it”. His wife Annetje did not want it because it was “blood money”.¹³¹ In addition to clothing, body parts were also traded on the marketplace that emerged at the murder scene, sold as souvenirs. Some thought this activity justified. According to one pamphleteer, parts of De Witt’s body were sold because De Witt had “sold parts of the Dutch Republic”.¹³²

Stories about re-emerging body parts of Johan and Cornelis de Witt started to appear in all parts of Holland shortly after the murders. A letter

¹²⁶ Supposedly, this was done by Verhoeff. *Gedenkwaardige Stukken*, Van der Wulp 4956. Cf. *Uit het Dagboek van de Amsterdamse koopman Isaac Pool* Signatuur KB 122 D 4: 1669.

¹²⁷ Gonnet, *Briefwisseling tusschen de gebroeders Van der Goes. Tweede Deel*, 406.

¹²⁸ *Graf-schrift, van Johan de Wit gewesene Raadt-Pensionaris* (1672), Petit 3936.

¹²⁹ *Missive uyt 's Gravenhage*, Tiele 611.

¹³⁰ Gonnet, *Briefwisseling tusschen de gebroeders Van der Goes. Tweede Deel*, 408.

¹³¹ Dirckx, *Wonderlijke Doot*, Tiele 616.

¹³² *De Geest*, Tiele 6308; *Afbeelding*, Knuttel 10196; Overvelt, *Coppe*, Petit 3922.

written a day after the assassination mentioned that “today here outside of Rotterdam, on the corner of the Broederslaan in an inn called the Bergsen Vliegestal, two boys have shown everyone an ear and a piece of a shirt-sleeve”.¹³³ According to an anonymous writer, on 21 August Cornelis's widow, Maria van Berckel, met a man on a barge who showed her a finger of her murdered husband.¹³⁴ Adriaan van der Goes saw the hearts in The Hague. “The heart of the Ruwart van Putten, that was much smaller than his brother's, was shot with a bullet.”¹³⁵ A citizen from The Hague kept four parts of the heart of Johan de Witt with teeth marks still in them. According to their owner, one part had been eaten in 1673.¹³⁶ As late as 1707, Hendrik Verhoeff showed a silver tobacco box containing Johan de Witt's tongue and one of Cornelis's toes to curious people.¹³⁷

*“It Is a Daily Display No One Can Deny, That
the Way We Live Is the Way We Die”*

The assassination of Johan and Cornelis de Witt was a collective act by citizens who sought justice and corrected the – in their eyes – dubious verdict of the Court of Holland. After the murders, reactions in print flooded bookshops, marketplaces, barges, inns, churches and militia houses. These publications debated the reasons for and the meaning of the event.

Although many articulated their disgust, most authors agreed that the murders had been necessary. The pamphleteer Johan Gribbius gives the impression that he had taken an early modern version of an opinion poll. He commented:

Some believed it to be a heroic act, and a relief for our repressed freedom. Others did not justify or condemn it at all and simply saw it as a special judgement that was not to be questioned. Many damned the killing, however, and thought that the state would go down with these men.¹³⁸

¹³³ *Coppye, van eenen Brief, geschreven uyt 's Gravenhage, van den eenentwintigste Augusti dese Iaers* (1672), Knuttel 10193.

¹³⁴ Wichers, “Bijzonderheden,” 97.

¹³⁵ Gonnet, *Briefwisseling*, II, 410.

¹³⁶ Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 768.

¹³⁷ The thumb and toe from the bodies can still be seen today in the historical museum in The Hague.

¹³⁸ Gribbius, *D'Ontroerde Leeuw*, Knuttel 10526, 44.

Gribbius's threefold division corresponds neatly with the ninety-nine pamphlets that commented on the murder. One group defended the brothers De Witt posthumously in print, another group was indifferent, and a third group justified the murder.¹³⁹ Eighteen pamphleteers offered a positive view of the brothers De Witt, while two defended the True Freedom. Forty-eight pamphlets were hostile to the brothers De Witt. Four were neutral towards the brothers and twenty-nine offered no particular judgement. Fifty-two of these publications supported the prince of Orange, while only two attacked William.

Condemnation

The assassination of the brothers De Witt was condemned by pamphleteers who were not necessarily adherents of the True Freedom but stood amazed by the act itself and shivered to think of the legal ramifications should the murderers escape prosecution. Their main argument was that society would crumble without respect for the law, which meant that citizens should not play the role of judge.¹⁴⁰ One pamphleteer could not believe that a man who had already received his sentence and a man who had never even been put on trial had been killed. "If you call the English murderers of kings, you shall be known in the whole world as murderers of brothers".¹⁴¹ Another pamphleteer concluded that if someone can be executed after he has been acquitted by a court, it is "better to be a slave in Turkey then a regent in Holland. Ungrateful fatherland! Ungrateful citizenry!"¹⁴² Some publicists carefully whispered blame in the direction of the prince of Orange, but most showed their disgust for the citizens from The Hague.¹⁴³ The idea that the people who were guilty of the murders should be arrested to avoid the danger of a retaliatory bloodbath turned out to be no more than wishful thinking.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ The pamphlets that defended Johan and Cornelis de Witt and the True Freedom posthumously were *Haegsche Vader-moort Geschiedt dan 20 Augusti 1672* (1672), Knuttel 10444; J. Oudaen, *De Laster-Kladde der Landverraderie op de Heeren Magistraten uytgeworpen, Afgekeert, en Neergetreden* (1672), Tiele 6348.

¹⁴⁰ *Leger-praetje*, Tiele 6514.

¹⁴¹ *d'Ontdeckte Ambassade*, Knuttel 10466.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 2. Cf. Fidelis, *Hollants Mars-Banquet*, Knuttel 10308.

¹⁴³ *d'Ontdeckte Ambassade*, Knuttel 10466; *De Gemartelde Trouw* (1672), Tiele 6337; *Het Grootte Witte Moort-Toneel* (1672), Knuttel 10447; Vryling, *Het onbevleekte Wit*, Knuttel 10230, 12.

¹⁴⁴ *Den Oprechten Patriot*, Knuttel 10497, 4.

Justification

The larger group of pamphlets that supported the murders again fell into two groups. One group agreed with the elimination of the De Witts but condemned the executioners because the death sentence had not been carried out by the proper authorities. One pamphleteer wrote, “not that I despise the death of two traitors, but that you citizens have become executioners and murderers, that is too horrible!”¹⁴⁵ A second group supported the murders with fewer reservations. These pamphleteers were in general enthusiastic about how events had developed on 20 August.¹⁴⁶ On 21 August, only one day after the murder, the killing was justified by the pamphlet *Sententie van den Generalen Hove van Nederlant*.¹⁴⁷ This pamphlet is an iconic example of the justificatory publications that appeared shortly after the assassination. It was signed by “the citizens of the seven provinces, and all lovers and supporters of God’s church and the fatherland”. The unknown author, who was not a supporter of the citizens at all, had gathered twenty-one reasons why the murder of the brothers had been necessary and just. After listing the reasons, the author used the words “*Soo ist*”, a term that was normally only used in judicial sentences to precede the punishment. This pamphleteer was framing the murders in such a way that the audience knew that it was reading the death sentence of Johan and Cornelis de Witt as it should have been written one day earlier.

The Murders as a Warning to Other Regents

After the justification of the assassination, which can be seen as establishing that the murders fell into the middle ground of public opinion, pamphleteers used the murders to support their claims. What we can gather from these pamphlets shows an emancipated and confident group of citizens at the top of its political power. The lion’s share of these pamphlets consisted of threats and warnings to the regents who were still walking around. The riotous movement had shown its strength and according to

¹⁴⁵ *’t Bleetende-Kalf* (1672), Knuttel 10535; *Op de Sententie Van Mr. Cornelis de Wit, Ruart van Putten* (1672), Knuttel 10424.

¹⁴⁶ *Het Radt van Avontuere*, Knuttel 10304, 3; *Oploop der Boeren in Nederlandt, Voorgevallen in ’t Verraat-Jaar* (1672), Knuttel 10218; Borrebach, *De Haegsche Anatomie*, Knuttel 10403, 3.

¹⁴⁷ *Sententie*, Knuttel 10409.

several pamphleteers, regents were well advised to keep this in mind. Adriaen Overvelt, who witnessed the murders in person, had already noticed that during the night of 20 August the members of the city militia who had to walk the night watch had yelled through the streets, “this is the way traitors will be treated!”¹⁴⁸ One pamphleteer explicitly mentioned Maarten van Juchem, a former commander of Wesel, an “old man” who had betrayed the fatherland but who “is alive, and resides in The Hague at the moment”.¹⁴⁹ Another pamphleteer claimed that the murders were an example “which all current and future regents can use as a mirror”.¹⁵⁰

In addition to open threats, pamphlets were also filled with concealed intimidation. This could range from a description of the assassination as a *Bonam Factum* [a praiseworthy act] to the warning *Felix quem faciunt aliena pericula cautum* [Happy is the person who is made cautious by the perils of others].¹⁵¹ One pamphleteer claimed that the other “White Devils” should be killed as well. About the killers, he said, “they should continue as they do”.¹⁵² Another author wrote, “Yes, every citizen seems determined to beat such traitors to death as they should”.¹⁵³

Arguments that addressed a politician’s political capability became more frequent after the assassination of the brothers De Witt. It was clear that many important offices would have to be filled by new men quickly. How to determine whom to appoint? This question opened the floodgates for the large number of capability claims that were published during the following weeks. When these arguments about capability were combined with publications that validated resistance, the ground was prepared for the purges of September and October. The first purges were executed directly after the murders and without government interference.

¹⁴⁸ Overvelt, *Coppye*, Petit 3922.

¹⁴⁹ *Den Grooten en Witten Duyvel*, Knuttel 10317, 4.

¹⁵⁰ *Den Bedrogen*, Van Alphen 366, 22; *Kort Verhael*, Knuttel 10264, 8.

¹⁵¹ *Kort Verhael*, Knuttel 10264, 8; *Leven en Doodt, Vande Heeren en Meesters, Cornelis en Johan de Witt, I. Deel* (1672), Knuttel 10434, 10.

¹⁵² *Den Oprechten Patriot*, Knuttel 10497, 2; *Groeningse Rommelpot*, Petit 3869.

¹⁵³ *Het Geding*, Knuttel 10400.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A SOVEREIGN COUNT OF ORANGE

Armed citizens marched to the city hall in a large number of cities in Holland, Zeeland and Friesland during the first days after the murders. There they stood, hundreds at a time, shouting in markets and public squares in Dordrecht, Veere and Leeuwarden, waving their flags in Haarlem, Zierikzee and Monnikendam, throwing stones at regents in Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Goes. Essentially the riots played out in similar fashion in most towns: the march was led by the most respectable citizens, who climbed the steps of the city hall with a petition in their hands. While scared regents drafted an answer to the demands in these petitions, citizens outside threateningly yelled that they knew what had happened in The Hague and that they would also start to collect “noses and ears” if the regents delayed. In the wake of the murders, hundreds of regents lost their offices. It was a political earthquake. At the same time, a second wave of printed petitions flooded the Republic. Since by this time it was clear that dozens, if not hundreds, of political offices would quickly become vacant, the demands in these petitions were mostly concerned with political capability. Citizens wanted *a* (not even necessarily *the*) vote in the appointment of new magistrates and members of the city councils. Moreover, citizens wanted to appoint their own city militia administration. For the first project petitions containing lists of capable candidates for available offices were spread. In all cities, citizens shared one wish: all incapable regents had to lay down office as quickly as possible.

These so-called political purges were not initiated by the prince of Orange as is often thought. They were the work of riotous citizens. That William was given the power to “change governments” on 26 August by the States of Holland was a reaction to the first spontaneous purges rather than their cause.

Orangist courtiers and propagandist did try to connect to the citizens’ movement.¹ In an attempt to jump on this bandwagon, Orangist pamphleteers claimed that now was the time to go all the way and appoint the

¹ Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 174.



Fig 8. Riotous crowd, gathering in front of city hall in Haarlem. F.J. Frohlich, *Haarlem, 't Stadhuis in 1672* (1902), Noord-Hollands archief, collection Braakman 55-13468.

prince of Orange to the sovereign office of count of Holland.² In the pamphlet *Krachtige Beweeg-redenen*, the pamphleteer dictated the method for executing this undertaking. He suggested that the inhabitants (he explicitly mentioned peasants in addition to citizens, a red flag that this pamphlet was not written by a participant of the citizens' movement) would have to delegate men who could request, with a petition, this third Orangist appointment from their government.³

This campaign needed drastic measures. Had not the appointment of the prince to the office of stadholder shown that political power lay with the people in 1672? If sovereignty lay with the people, how could the prince become sovereign? The answer, argued Orangists, was transference. A mock petition supposedly written by a group that called itself "The great

² *Het Hollandts A.B. Boeck*, Knuttel 10598; *Krachtige beweegh-redenen* (1672), Knuttel 10316; *Nodige Consideratien*, Knuttel 10597; *Voor de Liefhebbers van 't Vaderlandt* (1672), Knuttel 10310. In late July the Amsterdam regent Gilles Valckenier had proposed elevating the prince to the office of count, but the plan came to nothing. Gebhard, "Amsterdamsche aantekeningen uit 1672," 174.

³ *Krachtige beweegh-redenen*, Knuttel 10316. Cf. *Nodige Consideratien*, Knuttel 10597, 6.

assembly of the common people of this state" claimed that William should take on "dominion". The pamphleteer added that this sovereignty should not be provided in part, but "completely". The writer tried to present the civic movement and the Orangist campaign as symbiotic: the prince of Orange was supposed to fend off dangers from abroad, while the citizens were supposed to fight the enemy "from within".⁴ This joint action would save the Dutch Republic.

William and his propagandists took a giant risk. A count was a king in disguise and in large part Dutch identity in the seventeenth century was based on escaping the tyrannical grasp of the Spanish king. True, Dutchmen had given massive support to the appointment of the prince to the office of stadholder, but this was explicitly not a monarchical office.

Orangists needed to argue carefully. The campaign to appoint the prince of Orange to the sovereign office of count – of which this pamphlet was a part – was based on several arguments that recalled the first two Orangist campaigns of the year. Pamphleteers were still moving cautiously from one campaign to another, careful not to deviate too far from the middle ground of public opinion. They still used "the English connection" in their argumentation for the promotion of the prince, just as they had used it during the earlier campaigns to promote William to army leader and stadholder.

Again propagandists promised that England would make peace with the Dutch, as soon as William was given another position.⁵ A pamphleteer who mimicked the brothers De Witt in the afterlife claimed that the prince of Orange should now be obeyed to ensure "a new treaty with England".⁶ Another pamphleteer wrote that "it is far better to give in to England now, than to risk everything".⁷ In a dialogue between three men from France, Cologne and England, the Englishman claimed that peace with England would follow quickly after the murders of the brothers De Witt. The English would, claimed the character, "follow Orange now" to ensure this peace.⁸

Orangist pamphleteers also explored new ideas. The prince of Orange was, for one, described as the only possible mediator between citizens and government. Whereas pamphleteers had formerly stressed the beneficial

⁴ *Reqveste Voor de groote Vergaderinge van 't gemeene Volck deses Lands* (1672) Tiele 6506.

⁵ Cf. *Nodige Consideratien*, Knuttel 10597.

⁶ *De Spreeckende Geesten*, Knuttel 10404.

⁷ *Reqveste*, Tiele 6506, 3–4. Cf. *Het Hollandts A.B. Boeck*, Knuttel 10598.

⁸ *Het Nieuwe Engels en Frans Verkeerbert* (1672), Van der Wulp 4958, 3. Cf. *Krachtige beweegh-redenen*, Knuttel 10316.

role that the prince of Orange could play for the citizens, now the prince of Orange was also marketed as the protector of government against riotous citizens. According to these pamphleteers, the surest way to prevent further riots and upheavals was to elevate the prince once more. One pamphleteer lashed out at riotous citizens, claiming that the consequence of their political purifications was that “good regents are replaced and bad regents remain in office”. The prince of Orange would surely decide more wisely.⁹

“We Are Orangists, but We Are Not Stupid Orangists”

In addition to adding a role to the repertoire of Orangist responsibilities, single-headed government was now, for the first time since the 1640s, proposed as a possibility in the Dutch political structure. An Orangist count was put forward as an alternative to the regent-aristocracy. If there was ever a monarchical moment in the history of the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century, September 1672 was it. Most telling in this sense was the pamphlet *A.B. Boeck* that was published during the first weeks of September.¹⁰ The author of the *A.B. Boeck* argued that he wrote his work as a strategy to regain the hard-won freedom of the Dutch Republic, which was at the time threatened. That we can speak of an Orangist campaign – not just an Orangist pamphlet – to appoint a sovereign count becomes clear when we read that the author of the *A.B. Boeck* suggested reading his pamphlet together with another pamphlet called *Geneesmiddelen voor Hollands qualen*, which featured similar argumentation.¹¹ This argumentation relied heavily on contemporary monarchical political thought. In this short political treatise, the author used the classics (leaning heavily on Tacitus, Cicero and Sallust), natural law, the Bible and contemporary history in his defence. He based his position on the assumption that all governments had three phases: beginning, growth and decline.¹² Since the recent decline of the True Freedom, now was the time for a new form of government. The options, so claimed the author, were threefold, and he referred to Tacitus (instead of to the more commonly cited Aristotle) for the three archetypical forms of government: firstly, there was the

⁹ *Nodige Consideratien*, Knuttel 10597.

¹⁰ *Het Hollandts A.B. Boeck*, Knuttel 10598.

¹¹ This second publication did not, however, mention the countship. *Genees-middelen voor Hollants-Qualen*, Knuttel 10376.

¹² *Het Hollandts A.B. Boeck*, Knuttel 10598, 3.

government of *limites nationes, & urbes populus*, which the pamphleteer translated as “popular or civic government”; secondly, there was the rule of *aut primores*, which became “noble and best of the citizenry”; and the last option was *aut singuli regunt*, a “single head”.¹³ Atypically, the pamphleteer set out to argue that the last form was the best type of government for the Dutch Republic. To strengthen his argument, he remarked that “nobody should think that monarchical government was without fault”. Of all forms of government, monarchies were the most prone to tyranny, but the advantages, so claimed the author, far outweighed the disadvantages.¹⁴ By describing rule in the Dutch Republic until 1650 as monarchical, the author tried to make monarchical government part of the middle ground of the history of Dutch politics.¹⁵ He also crudely refuted the idea of taking Venice, the referential flagship of the True Freedom, as a political model, claiming that Venice, although it had functioned perfectly, was “only a city” and therefore innately different from the Dutch Republic, where all provinces and cities would have wanted to become sovereign.¹⁶ In the end, claimed the pamphleteer, all successful republics had chosen single heads and this was the road that the Dutch Republic should and would take. True Freedom had been nothing more than “imaginary liberty”, implying real freedom lay under the government of a single head.¹⁷

The rest of the argumentation of this short but dense pamphlet was divided into three groups of examples illustrating why single-headed government surpassed all other forms. To start, monarchy was best, because “all authorities” thought so. The Bible and the classics, claimed the pamphleteer, were unanimous: single-headed government was the oldest and first form of government. In support of this statement, he cited Cicero, Justinian and Sallust and called Adam a “stadholder”.¹⁸ Moreover, borrowing an example from the Fifth Monarchists, the pamphleteer pointed out that the four peoples that had achieved world dominion in history (Syria, Assyria, Persia and Rome) had all been monarchical.

Secondly, aristocracy (and democracy) had proven themselves to be wanting. A government with more than one head could not function, claimed the author, because “there were an equal number of opinions as

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 7.

¹⁵ Ibid., 8.

¹⁶ Cf. Haitsma Mulier, *The Myth of Venice*.

¹⁷ Ibid. Cf. De Huybert, *Verdediging* (Knuttel 9970a).

¹⁸ *Het Hollandts A.B. Boeck*, Knuttel 10598, 12–15.

there were heads”.¹⁹ Government with many heads inevitably leads to bloodbaths and murders, a reference to the murders of the brothers De Witt. Importantly, in the case of bad governance, in a monarchy the replacement of one ruler sufficed, while in an aristocracy many rulers had to be dismissed. Moreover, in an aristocracy an upheaval could be stopped only by the complete ruin of government, “because everyone has equal power, which means that no one will bow down to another unless force is used”.²⁰

Thirdly, monarchy was natural, while aristocracy and democracy were unnatural. The pamphleteer claimed that a body had room for only one head. Everything else was unnatural. How could the natural government of the earth function if there was more than one sun? Basically, single-headed government was “the oldest, best, and safest form of government that had God as its author, nature as its model and all the nations as its teachers”.²¹

According to this pamphleteer, the new political structure in the Republic should therefore be a hereditary countship that was limited only by laws and privileges. The prince should rule as a sovereign and the magistrates should function as his parliament. This last term, “parliament”, was not at all part of Dutch political vocabulary, which points in the direction of a strong English connection behind this *A.B. Boeck*.

This Orangist campaign had some effect on a group of peasants in the area around Rotterdam, where on 31 August “an army of peasants” threatened to plunder the city if the prince of Orange was not appointed to the office of count.²² Elsewhere, the Orangist count campaign was vigorously opposed. Dutch citizens turned against the new and radical Orangist plans. Some men from Vlissingen, in the province of Zeeland, claimed, “We are Orangists, but we are not stupid Orangists”.²³ The pamphlet audience did not accept a sovereign leader, not even the prince of Orange. After the overwhelming success of the first two Orangist campaigns of the year – the appointment as army leader and the appointment to the office of stadholder – this third campaign failed miserably.

Orangist pamphleteers quickly admitted their defeat. They recognised that their plans had lost the middle ground of public opinion and abandoned the pursuit of this monarchical goal. Political campaigns were

¹⁹ Ibid., 15.

²⁰ Ibid., 7.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Oudaen, “Dagverhaal”.

²³ *Remonstrantie*, Knuttel 10579a.

apparently not the monopoly of the cleverest minds who were used to arguing in sophisticated books. Political communication was also the interplay between pamphlets and their reception by normal Dutchmen.

Capability for Office

Riotous citizens opposed the plans to turn the prince of Orange into a sovereign count in a remarkable way, as we can see from a printed dialogue between an officer and a member of the city militia from Amsterdam. Discussing the riots and political upheavals that had flooded the Dutch Republic during the first days of September, the officer stated, "I had hoped that it would have stopped after the promotion of the prince of Orange". The member of the city militia replied, "There are other things that have not been accomplished and the *burghers* want these too".²⁴

Pamphleteers who supported these citizens described the stadholder as an officer who could govern only together with the provincial states. They did not cry monarchy in 1672. They pleaded instead for a new batch of regents whose patriotism and political capability would safeguard the proper public responsibilities to fend off the enemy and preserve the state. Not one of the dozens of petitions that were filed and printed after the murders of Johan and Cornelis de Witt supported the plan to appoint the prince of Orange to the office of count.

Riots earlier in 1672 had concentrated on supporting the prince of Orange and undermining the True Freedom. Now, however, citizens demanded new leaders with political capability.²⁵ This meant that the prince of Orange could no longer automatically count on the support of the riotous citizens. On two occasions (in Haarlem and Veere) William had sent soldiers to restore the peace after riots had broken out. In both cases, these soldiers were denied entrance into the city by angry citizens. Citizens in Delft became so impatient with waiting for an answer from the prince of Orange to their petition that they started to purify government themselves and simply demanded that all regents lay down their offices. In Goes, a notoriously Orangist village in Zeeland, the prince of Orange did not play a role at all during the purges.²⁶

²⁴ *Wacht-Practje*, Knuttel 10564.

²⁵ Cf. A. van Dixhoorn, "'Voorstanden van de vrije wetten'. Burgerbewegingen in Arnhem en de Republiek tussen 1702 en 1707," *Tijdschrift voor sociale geschiedenis* 25, no. 1 (1999): 44.

²⁶ Cf. Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 186.

"We Are Watching"

"Or else we will clean up like those in The Hague." This threat was added to a petition containing demands for political reform that was nailed to the door of the Exchange Hall in Amsterdam three days after the assassination of Johan and Cornelis de Witt. The petition was composed by members of the city militia who told their magistrates, "fulfil these demands, or we will kill you as well".²⁷

This violent petition from Amsterdam gives another example of how riotous citizens and Orangists parted ways. The petition appeared in print on the same day as it was nailed to the door of the Exchange. It demanded six political reforms: (1) the traditional city militia rules had to be restored, (2) all militia captains who also served in the city council should resign their office immediately, (3) local magistrates should no longer be involved in the management of the East and West India Companies, (4) the militia houses should be restored, (5) the defence of the city should be returned to the citizens, and (6) new members of the city council should no longer be chosen through co-optation by city magistrates, but by the citizens themselves. These petitioners concluded their demands with the aforementioned death threat. For the Amsterdam regents who read the demands on the doors of the Exchange Hall another threat was added: "Whoever takes this down will enjoy a bullet as reward. We are watching".²⁸

Historians who have used Orangism as an explanatory model for this petition have obscured one of the most interesting periods of the Year of Disaster. Gustaaf Renier, for example, has claimed that all "democratic demands" in petitions were the product of Orangist feelings, while Piet Geyl described this particular petition as "an Orangist product".²⁹ Neither Renier nor Geyl was, however, aware of the existence of different versions of this petition. Geyl did not study the petition that had been drafted by the citizens at all. He used a later altered version that appeared shortly after the publication of the original petition.³⁰ It claimed to be exactly the same document, but in reality, the demands in the second version differed from those in the original. One of the demands now read that the prince of Orange should have at his disposal all financial resources from the city.

²⁷ *Het aengeplackt Biljet*, Tiele 6125 ed. (1672).

²⁸ *Het aengeplackt Biljet*, Tiele 6125.

²⁹ Renier, *De Noord-Nederlandse Natie*, 231; Geyl, "Democratische Tendenties in 1672". Cf. Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 155.

³⁰ *Eysch, Van de Burgers van Amsterdam* (1672), Petit 3947.

To complicate matters, a third version of the petition also appeared, in which the most radical demand of the original petition – that citizens should chose the new regents for the city council – had disappeared, changing the document into a more moderate Orangist publication.³¹

Evidence that we can speak of an original version and altered versions is provided by the Amsterdammers Lucas Watering, a member of the city militia, and Isaak Pool, a merchant. Both men thought the petition of such importance that they copied its content into their diaries. Although Isaak Pool paraphrased the document instead of transcribing it, both men obviously referred to the original edition. Neither of them appears to have seen Orangist or factional motivation behind the publication. Isaak Pool referred to the petitioners as “some bold citizens”.³²

The different versions of the petition show that groups who had shared a political goal during June and July – to undermine the True Freedom – parted ways after the assassination. Citizens now had their own agenda. These citizens' demands were rather homogenous: capability meant the same to citizens in different cities and in different provinces. The demands in the city of Middelburg, in the province of Zeeland, resembled demands in Amsterdam or Rotterdam, in Holland, and to a large extent closely matched demands in Leeuwarden, in the province of Friesland, as well. What can this uniformity tell us, particularly in light of the supposedly local nature of early modern popular movements? Print and the distribution of pamphlets – including petitions – may provide a key to the character of these movements. News about the murders of Johan and Cornelis de Witt was spread over the entire province of Holland within one day. At nine o'clock on the evening of 20 August news of the murders had already reached Rotterdam and Haarlem. People in Amsterdam and Delft knew the next day.³³ The murders took place on Saturday; riots started on

³¹ *Eysch Van de Burgers van Amsterdam Dat aen de Beurs heeft geplackt gestaen, en door Last van Schepenen afgescheurt, den 29 Augusty, 's Morgens ten 9 uuren precijs* (1672) Knuttel 10217. For all different versions see *Oprechten Eysch Van de Burgeren te Amsterdam* (1672) Knuttel 10216; *Eysch van de Burgeren te Amsterdam, aende Beurs geplackt, en door last van de Schepenen afgescheurt den 23. Augusty ten 9 uyren* (1672) Van der Wulp 4826; *Correct aengeplackt Biljet* (1672) Knuttel 10214; *Eysch Van de Burgeren te Amsterdam, Aende Beurs geplackt, en door de last van de Schepenen afgescheurt den 23 Augusty ten 9 uyren* (1672) Knuttel 10215; *Eysch van de Burgers van Amsterdam*, Tiele 6129.

³² Gebhard, “Een dagboek uit het rampjaar 1672,” 91; *Uit het Dagboek van de Amsterdamse koopman Isaac Pool* Signatuur KB 122 D 4: 1669. Cf. *Hydra*, Knuttel 10601.

³³ Oudaen, “Dagverhaal”; Schrieck, “Jornaal”; Vroesen, *Waaragtig Verhaal*, 165. Cf. Gonnet, *Briefwisseling tusschen de gebroeders Van der Goes*. Tweede Deel, 408; Langedult, *Kort verhaal*, 21; *Uit het Dagboek van de Amsterdamse koopman Isaac Pool* Signatuur KB 122 D 4: 1669.

Sunday in Amsterdam, Haarlem and Delft and on Monday in Rotterdam and Leiden. Others followed within days.

Since news spread so quickly – at this point in 1672, when publications appeared daily, the appearance of a pamphlet was a news event in its own right – we can assume that citizens knew what had happened and, more importantly, what was being demanded in other cities soon enough for the movement to become something greater than the sum of its parts. Everywhere, citizens purified their governments.³⁴ Pamphlets appeared that approached the several revolts and political purifications as a single event, and arguments that justified this riotous movement were applied to all citizens, not just those of one city.³⁵

If what we witness here is an example of a popular movement that crossed the boundaries of the locality, why has Dutch historiography been so determined to condemn the Year of Disaster as Orangist terrorism and so eager to tell a story about regents, factions and successful political intrigues, instead of a story about popular revolt, good governance, accountability and capability? The difference between politicians and ‘the people’ has been taken at face value, while in reality, citizens considered regents to be part of their own group. While politics in 1672 was not the business of all, large groups in society did claim their part in the body politic.

We can see evidence of this in the fact that the Orangist pamphlet *A.B. Boeck* was refuted by a pamphleteer who supported the burgher movement. His response was called the *Gecorrigeerde A.B. Boeck* [Revised A.B. Boeck]. The idea of a sovereign count was so preposterous to this pamphleteer that he argued in favour of a democracy instead of a countship as the ideal form of government for the Dutch Republic.³⁶ The author boasted on the first page of his pamphlet that the rule of many surpassed all other forms of government. During the remainder of the pamphlet, however, the author did not defend democracy at all but attacked the notion of a sovereign count by refuting the arguments from the original *A.B. Boeck*, which forces us to think of the pamphlet as satire, not a genuine plea for democracy. To be sure, the political vision behind the author’s preferred form of government became clear when he refuted the idea that God had bestowed humankind with monarchical rule. According to the

³⁴ Cf. Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, 244–286.

³⁵ Cf. *Bedenkingen Knuttel* 10265; Salomons, “De rol van de Amsterdamse burgerbeweging,” 213.

³⁶ *Het gecorrigeerde Hollants A.B. Boeck* (1672), Knuttel 10599.

pamphleteer, God had reserved supreme authority for himself, while human government was given republican form, with an army leader as a safeguard controlling this republican government. This duke (read stadholder), led a republic during times of war and advised the government in times of peace, but he had “no absolute power”. The author of the *Revised A.B. Boeck* was describing the political structure in the Dutch Republic in accordance with the accepted norms of the burgher movement: a republic with an eminent head in the form of a stadholder. There was neither a sovereign monarch nor a parliament in sight.³⁷

The Second Wave of Petitions

The central theme of the riots and purges that followed the murders of Johan and Cornelis de Witt was political capability. Capability, or “*bequaemheit*” and “*capaciteyt*” as Dutch contemporaries called it, was used as the opposite of the favouritism and nepotism that had supposedly marked the period of True Freedom. The call for capability did not give new connotations to this term, but instead citizens pleaded for stricter adherence to ways in which capability was already defined in many instructions, resolutions and charters. Candidates from now on were to have the necessary qualifications before they could be granted a military or political office. Many different qualifications, taken together, determined someone’s capability. Previously it had sometimes been seen as sufficient for the candidate to be loyal to faction interests (euphemistically called “being of the proper maxims”). Now, however, qualifications were closely inspected, and capability was debated. To understand these claims made by citizens, we need to distinguish between capability for office and capability in office. A person’s capability for office, on one hand, was determined in miscellaneous and sometimes contradictory ways that could vary according to local context. A person’s capability in office, on the other hand, was judged on the basis of accomplishments and the deliverance of good governance. As the events of 1672 show, the epithet “capable” could be gained, lost, regained, or lost again.³⁸

Both ideology (party) and personal political allegiance (faction) were important to a person’s perceived capability for office, but this *bequaemheit*

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Cf. J. Hartman, J. Nieuwstraten and M. Reinders, *Public Offices, Private Demands. Capability in Governance in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic* (Newcastle, 2009).

had other requirements as well, including issues of religion, citizenship, patriotism, finance and the illusive category of *aensienlijckheyt*.³⁹ This call for capability was most apparent in the second wave of petitions that accompanied the purges after August. These petitions were printed in six places in the province of Zeeland (Middelburg, Veere, Zierikzee, Tholen, Vlissingen and Goes), seven cities in the province of Holland (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Haarlem, Delft, Leiden, and Dordrecht) and one city in the province of Friesland (Leeuwarden). In total nearly two hundred political changes were demanded in these cities. The position of the prince of Orange was no longer an issue in the minds of these citizens. The men and women who are supposed to have acted during this period from an innate love for the prince hardly mentioned him in their demands. Where in June and July more than ninety per cent of all petitions had argued that the prince of Orange had to be promoted to the office of stadholder, representing more than twenty per cent of all demands in this period, now only seven of the nearly two hundred demands in September and October contained a reference to the prince of Orange or the office of stadholder.⁴⁰ Moreover, the quick peace with England, the trump card of the first two Orangist campaigns, was also absent.

In general, capability issues meant ensuring good governance. In Middelburg, for example, a group of citizens filed a petition on 1 October because some of the regents in their city had governed not with the common good in mind but for the promotion of their own interests and those of their families.⁴¹ According to the petitioners, the situation resembled *Imperium in Imperio* because five or six men had secluded themselves from the rest of the city council and held secret meetings at the Red Lion Inn. They decided on important issues without the consent of the other regents, which violated the “fundamental laws and privileges” of Middelburg. Moreover, this handful of regents had become suspiciously wealthy in a short time, which, so it was claimed, could only be a result of foul play. This personal gain was at the expense of the interests of the

³⁹ Cf. Colenbrander, *Bescheiden uit vreemde archieven*. Tweede deel, 179–181.

⁴⁰ Z. Bevensteyn van Hofdyck and T. Valensis, *Resolutien, genomen by de gesamentlijke Schutteren der Stadt Delft* (1672), Knuttel 10529; *Remonstrantie*, Knuttel 10579a; *Ordonnantie Of dispositijf van sijn Hoogheyt den Heer Prince van Orange* (1672), Knuttel 10578; *Coppye*, Knuttel 10159; *Lijste van de Nominatie, genomen bij de gesamentlijke Schutterije van 's Graven-Hage* (1672), Petit 3951; *Aen haer Ed. Groot- Achth. Heeren Burgermeesteren en ses-en-dertigh Raden, mitsgaders de Heeren van den Gerechte der Stadt Amsterdam* (1672), Van der Wulp 4846.

⁴¹ *Remonstrantie*, Tiele 6493.

Republic because the “inhabitants, widows and orphans” had become poor since trade had declined as a result of the war. Moreover, the regents had instituted succession in office by family members instead of choosing “the most qualified and the most honest *burghers*”.⁴² Now these citizens came up with new rules for new administrators in order to get “knowledgeable men” into government.⁴³

The Good Regent

In determining capability for office, petitioners explored several characteristics of the good regent. Since their goal was a government that had built-in safeguards to prevent oligarchy, trust was one of the contested issues. When could a society put their lives in the hands of their regents? The first solution of the petitioners was obvious: all new regents had to be citizens of the community that they governed. This was the case not only for important offices such as membership of the city council, but also for small offices in the management of a neighbourhood, the city militia or a church. If, by exception, “strangers” (non-citizens) were chosen for an office, they had to meet additional requirements. In the city of Veere, for example, such a “stranger” could only become a member of the city council if he had lived in the city for at least ten years and had been a member of the city militia.⁴⁴ This political obsession with citizenship did not fall from the sky in 1672. During the entire history of the Dutch Republic, many local politicians had been shown the door during meetings of the States General because they did not meet the minimal requirements of capability for office. Gerard Prouninck, for example, a mayor in Utrecht, was sent home without pardon when he wanted to enter the meeting hall of the States General: as a Brabander, he was a “stranger”.⁴⁵

The citizens who composed and filed petitions in 1672 knew very well that they were not writing their demands on a blank slate. There were many charters, ordinances, resolutions and other common law documents wherein earlier generations had debated capability. It is thus no surprise

⁴² Ibid., 3.

⁴³ Ibid. Cf. J. Steengracht, *Nootwendige en Zedige Verantwoordingh*, Knuttel 10581a, 14.

⁴⁴ *Ordonnantie*, (Knuttel 10578). Cf. Huygens, *Artyckelen*, Van Alphen 374; *Aen haer Ed. Groot- Achth*, Van der Wulp 4846; *Extract, Uyt de Resolutien*, Knuttel 10527; *Requeste*, Knuttel 10546; *Verhael van 't gepasseerde, 't Gene in de Nominaty is voorgevallen* (1672), Tiele 6463; *Request*, Knuttel 10572.

⁴⁵ Huygens, *Artyckelen*, (Van Alphen 374); Fruin, *Geschiedenis der staatsinstellingen*, 81–87, 105–111.

that the riotous men from Veere demanded that a resolution from 1640 be destroyed because it stated that “no *burgher* can get any office that is desired by one of the magistrates”.⁴⁶

In addition to citizenship, correct religious membership (or in some cases persuasion) was necessary. In Amsterdam, Delft, Haarlem, Middelburg, Leiden and Rotterdam new regents had to be of the True Reformed Religion. The citizens in Rotterdam added that aspiring governors had to be active members of their church.⁴⁷

Furthermore, new regents had to have some wealth. On the whole, the Dutch Republic was not run by its wealthiest men, many of whom had never been involved in government, but some means (or a lack of debt) was seen as necessary. This requirement was all the more important because political officers were at times not paid or not paid enough to survive without private means. In Middelburg someone who was behind in payments to the city or province could not be admitted to the local government.⁴⁸

Experience was an additional requirement. Several citizens from Rotterdam thought that new members of the city council should be “old enough” and new secretaries should hold at least a degree in law.⁴⁹ In Amsterdam, a captain, lieutenant, sergeant or troop leader of the city militia should have first served as a subordinate officer (*adelborst*), proving his capability to lead a group of men.⁵⁰

A final ingredient in the capability recipe was political ideological preference. In most cases, this meant that candidates could not have supported the Louvesteyn Faction. In Delft, for example, citizens explicitly mentioned in their petition that they wanted to get rid of “Louvesteyners” in their city.⁵¹

We must be wary of drawing anachronistic conclusions from these citizens and their petitions. This was not a movement that was rapidly heading towards modern ideals of equality. These citizens belonged to a hierarchical society and believed in fundamental inequality. A citizen was

⁴⁶ *Ordonnantie*, Knuttel 10578, 9.

⁴⁷ *Aen haer Ed. Groot-Achtb*, Van der Wulp, 4846; *Extract, Uyt de Resolutien*, Knuttel 10527; *Requeste*, Knuttel 10546; *Verhael*, Tiele 6463; *Request*, Knuttel 10572; *Remonstrantie*, Tiele 6493, 3; Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 746.

⁴⁸ *Remonstrantie*, Tiele 6493, 3; *Requeste*, Knuttel 10546; *Request*, Knuttel 10572. Cf. S.B. Baxter, *William III* (London, 1966).

⁴⁹ *Request*, Knuttel 10572.

⁵⁰ *Aen haer Ed. Groot-Achtb*, Van der Wulp 4846. Cf. *Requeste*, Knuttel 10546; *Ordonnantie*, Knuttel 10578, 4; Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 745–746.

⁵¹ *Extract, Uyt de Resolutien*, Knuttel 10527.

a different – and better – animal than a non-citizen. However, these citizens should get an honest chance to obtain an office according to the rules of political capability. In September 1672, an outraged citizen from Rotterdam complained about his own regents: “many among us are of better heritage than they are”.⁵²

Settling the Score

Why did city councils take decisions based on unanimity, instead of a majority vote? And why did regents who did not attend political meetings receive financial compensation? And why were the same individuals chosen for the office of mayor over and over again? If these men governed well, the community should benefit from their political prudence, but should they not move to the back of the line after their term so that others could also have these opportunities? Would this not be one way of preventing corruption?

When riotous citizens put political procedures under the magnifying glass, these were some of the questions they tried to answer. The citizens came up with rather radical solutions. In several places, they proposed the creation of citizen committees, made up of the most “*aensienlijcke*” citizens, who would control government. In addition, several groups suggested new procedures for filling vacant offices. On 8 September citizens in Leiden demanded that whenever an office became vacant, there had to be a period of two weeks before it could be filled again; new regents were currently being appointed “before the old ones were cold”. They also suggested a blind ballot to choose new candidates.⁵³

A consequence of this collective brainstorming over procedures was that citizens in Rotterdam, Haarlem, Middelburg, Veere, Amsterdam and Delft forbade their regents to hold more than one office.⁵⁴ In several cities an exemption was made for office holders who earned less than six hundred guilders a year, but the intention was clear. In Middelburg, citizens demanded that all terms of office should have a maximum of five years, after which the office would be filled by someone new.⁵⁵ The tradition of lifelong appointments in the Dutch Republic was under fierce attack.

⁵² *Een Brief uyt Rotterdam*, Knuttel 10153.

⁵³ *Eenige Pretensie die de Borgerye van Leyden Met Reeden pretendeeren* (1672), Knuttel 10543, 4. Cf. *Het aengeplackt Biljet*, Tiele 6125.

⁵⁴ Huygens, *Artyckelen*, Van Alphen 374; *Request*, Knuttel 10572; *Ordonnantie*, Knuttel 10578, 5–7; *Extract, Uyt de Resolutien*, Knuttel 10527; *Requeste*, Knuttel 10546.

⁵⁵ *Remonstrantie*, Tiele 6493, 3.

In Middelburg, citizens also proposed that at the end of meetings of the city council, every member had the right to put any subject on the table. Every suggestion that came up during this survey would have to be dealt with. The chairman of the council could not end the meeting before he had asked whether anyone had anything to add. In this way, dominant individuals or factions would be prevented from silencing less vociferous members.⁵⁶

Most Dutchmen were worried about the financial situation of their cities, provinces and the Republic. They demanded a more transparent and more reliable system of control of public finance. In several cities, citizens demanded to be included in controlling the annual accounts. In Rotterdam, citizens proposed the formation of a commission to control all the bankbooks. In this commission there ought to be two members of the city council or magistrate and two captains or lieutenants from the city militia.⁵⁷ Citizens in Middelburg had several bones to pick with individuals who had abused their offices for financial gain. Abraham Wijckaert had received a considerable amount each year for no apparent reason. The citizens wanted him to pay back every cent. A former secretary from Middelburg was subjected to close scrutiny because he had kept charging dead people. Most significantly, however, the States of Zeeland should account for all expenditures of the last twenty years. For every guilder they had spent, they had to show a receipt.⁵⁸

Pamphleteers embraced the idea brought forth by petitioners that the new political structure in the Republic needed control. One author described how a tax collector had painted "loyalty must show" in golden letters above his door. According to the pamphleteer, a peasant had written below, "Those who want to show loyalty, publicly show their accounts".⁵⁹

From this quest for accountability and protection through control, it appears again that citizens were not afraid to look beyond the boundaries of their own cities.⁶⁰ To make sure that none of the safeguards were forgotten, petitions claimed that the citizens' privileges, the foundation of participation in local politics in the first place, had to be published in new editions.⁶¹ In Haarlem, citizens demanded that all privileges should be

⁵⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁵⁷ *Request*, Knuttel 10572. Cf. *Requeste*, Knuttel 10546.

⁵⁸ *Remonstrantie*, Tiele 6493, 3. Cf. *Ordonnantie*, Knuttel 10578, 6, 11–12.

⁵⁹ *Eenvoudig Verhael*, Knuttel 10301, 4.

⁶⁰ *Request*, Knuttel 10572.

⁶¹ Cf. Heinz Schilling, "Civic Republicanism," 4–5.

printed and published so all *burghers* could read about their “freedom, the rights of nature, the rights of nations and the rights of war”.⁶² In Rotterdam citizens demanded that delegated members of their city in the States of Holland could no longer inform or consult with the prince of Orange without informing the city council first.⁶³ In Veere, citizens wanted to be able to control what had been discussed during meetings of the city council and therefore all resolutions should be made publicly accessible.⁶⁴

These men were not only protecting their own (late-)medieval local rights and privileges; they also took responsibility for the preservation of Dutch freedom on the European battlefield. Their first step was to ensure the recognition and publication of their rights and privileges. The second step was the appointment of new leaders who would oversee the correct application of these rights. The citizens from Haarlem articulated the goal of their petition incisively: they were supporting “their freedom, and the general peace and calm of their state and city”.⁶⁵

Increasing a Riot by Trying to End It

Hundreds of regents lost their positions after August 1672. One in every three regents in Holland had been forced to lay down his office by the time of the last purge of 1672, which took place in Schiedam on 1 November. In the other provinces, where political purifications went on until 1675, the proportion was even higher.⁶⁶ There were local differences. In Alkmaar and Purmerend, for example, not a single regent was dismissed. In Delft over half of all regents were forced to lay down their office. Rotterdam, Amsterdam and The Hague had equally impressive numbers in personnel turnover. Despite these variations, the purges can still be considered a single movement: riotous citizens from different cities and provinces read each other's pamphlets and printed petitions and encouraged each other to take action simultaneously. They made local riots into supra-local phenomena. Most regents saw only one way out: they bowed before this mighty force.

⁶² *Requeste*, Knuttel 10546. Cf. Valkenier, *'t Verwerde Europa*, Byvoegselen 137–139; *Aen haer Ed. Groot- Achthb*, Van der Wulp 4846; *Eenige Pretensie*, Knuttel 10543, 8; *Request*, Knuttel 10572.

⁶³ *Request*, Knuttel 10572.

⁶⁴ *Remonstrantie*, Tiele 6493, 3.

⁶⁵ *Requeste*, Knuttel 10546.

⁶⁶ Israel, *De Republiek*, 889–901.

Rotterdam, the city that started the political purifications, soon became known as “a rule and example for all the other cities, city councils and citizenries in Holland”.⁶⁷ Events in Rotterdam took off on 22 August, when a group of citizens decided to present a petition to government, demanding above all the resignation of fourteen of the twenty-four members of city council. The citizens initiated these purges by taking up arms, without orders from the mayors, and forcing the mayors to call for an emergency meeting of the city council. Balten Verbeek, one of these militiamen, had brought an assault group in case the magistrates refused.⁶⁸ The regents cooperated.

During the meeting, armed citizens presented an (unsigned) petition and suspect regents were forced to resign their jobs at gunpoint. In the meantime, citizens outside threatened to “come and collect noses and ears”, a reference to the murders in The Hague two days earlier.⁶⁹ After the meeting, the regents declared they had opposed the petition but had “fulfilled the desire of the *burghers*” nonetheless.⁷⁰ Part of this desire had been to invite the prince of Orange to visit their city and choose new regents from a nomination list that would be composed shortly.⁷¹ The regents also declared that they had not tried to stop the citizens because then they would have run the risk of making themselves liable to punishment, “for committing crimes against the peace and calm of the common land”.⁷² Seven of the fourteen regents who had been labelled incapable resigned immediately “in free will”. The other seven (Willem van der Aa, Gerard Gaal, Gerrit Vis, Arent Sonmans, Willem Bisschop, Adriaan Paets and Pieter de Groot) were, according to a pamphleteer, hunted down “in the garden outside of the city” by the city militia.⁷³ Several authors claimed that Van der Aa had been lucky because he would have been sent after the brothers De Witt “to be their secretary” had he been found that afternoon.⁷⁴

⁶⁷ J.P. Sillingh, *Rotterdam Hersteldt* (1672), Knuttel 10209.

⁶⁸ Vroesen, *Waaragtig Verhaal*, 165–67. Cf. *Eenvoudig Schuijt-praetje*, Knuttel 10472, 6; *Hydra. Tweede Deel*, Knuttel 10602, 25; Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 754–755.

⁶⁹ Vroesen, *Waaragtig Verhaal*, 173. Cf. Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 154.

⁷⁰ Vroesen, *Waaragtig Verhaal*, 173.

⁷¹ Sillingh, *Rotterdam Hersteldt*, Knuttel 10209.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷³ *Post-tyding*, Tiele 6121; Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 754–755; Cf. Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 154; Vroesen, *Waaragtig Verhaal*, 166.

⁷⁴ *Verhael Van 't gepasseerde tot Rotterdam* (1672), Zijlstra 1930; Vroesen, *Waaragtig Verhaal*, 173.

The next day three members of the city militia came to the city hall with another petition, which had been composed by notary Zeger van der Bruggen to ensure its approach was correct. It was a request to consider forty-eight men for the now-vacant fourteen offices.⁷⁵ The petition succeeded in its primary goal because for the remainder of the day the regents debated the names to be forwarded to the prince of Orange. Political capability was the leading factor discussed during this debate. One man was dismissed because his older brother was on the list of nominations as well, a second was ruled out because he was not of the True Reformed Religion, and a third did not make the cut because his wife was a known Arminian.⁷⁶ Next, a commission was sent to the prince of Orange to present the nominations. The prince chose nine men two days later.

From his selection, several issues concerning capability become clear. The prince of Orange took petitions and lists of candidates for office that had been made by citizens as seriously as the nominations that had been made by regents. For example, he initially chosen Jan van Berkel for the Rotterdam city council, but after citizens from Rotterdam made it clear that they opposed this choice – they wrote to William that they would “break his [Van Berkel’s] legs as soon as he would climb the stairs of city hall” – William replaced him with the more acceptable Dominicus Rosmaalen.⁷⁷ Also, after William had made his choice on 26 August, the list was presented to the citizens, who were asked for their consent. According to city secretary Jan Pietersz Sillingh, the newly appointed regents took an oath to the loud cheers of the citizenry. Sillingh hoped that other cities would carry out purges as well, for that would change positively “church, city hall and the fatherland”.⁷⁸

Amsterdam

Sillingh got his wish. The riots and purge in Rotterdam were quickly followed by riots and purges in many other cities. As noted above, a group of citizens in Amsterdam also took the initiative and stuck a petition to

⁷⁵ Cf. Vroesen, *Waaragtig Verhaal*, 176–179.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 180–181.

⁷⁷ Vroesen, *Waaragtig Verhaal*, 184–188. Cf. Oudaen, “Dagverhaal”; Sillingh, *Rotterdam Hersteldt*, Knuttel 10209, 3.

⁷⁸ Sillingh, *Rotterdam Hersteldt*, Knuttel 10209; *Missive Geschreven uyt Rotterdam* (1672), Knuttel 10208.

the door of the Grand Exchange on 23 August at nine in the morning.⁷⁹ Despite the threats on this particular piece of paper, an alderman removed the petition and took it to the city council. The Amsterdam regents responded in different ways. Hans Bontemantel, who wildly misinterpreted the situation, thought that it was not necessary to respond. The petition was not, however, composed by “rapailje”, as Bontemantel called them, but by citizens, and the rest of the city council and magistrates were scared that the murders in The Hague would turn out to be a foretaste of things to come, particularly because several violent pamphlets had been published in the days after the murders. One of these pamphlets suggested that the solution to the problem in the Dutch Republic was “to cut all traitors from top to bottom”, not just Johan and Cornelis de Witt. For Amsterdam, the pamphleteer suggested that the regents Lambert Reynst and Cornelis Outshoorn would suffice.⁸⁰ The city council decided to inform the States of Holland immediately about the petition, or the “famous and licentious pasquil” as it was now called. The Amsterdam regents asked the prince of Orange for a solution and decided to wait for his answer before they began to distribute “corporal punishment and the like”.⁸¹

William’s reaction reveals much about the breakdown of authority at that moment. He claimed that he neither had enough authority to counter the pasquil nor saw any realistic way to use his soldiers in Amsterdam. The prince suggested that it was best to “make a deal with the most respectable of the malcontent citizens after hearing their grievances”.⁸² The prince suggested that if this did not work, he could function as a mediator between the Amsterdam regents and the angry citizens, in his own words, “to find harmony”.⁸³ The prince thought that it was time for persuasion, not for a strict application of the law.⁸⁴

Back in Amsterdam, on 25 September the four mayors decided to arrange a meeting of the *Krijgsraad* where they would announce that as a consequence of the hostility between the citizenry and government that was growing daily, the city government had decided to step down and send nominations to the prince of Orange to select a new city government.

⁷⁹ *Het aengeplackt Biljet*, Tiele 6125.

⁸⁰ *Echo* (1672), Knuttel 10356.

⁸¹ Kernkamp, *De Regeeringe van Amsterdam*, 180.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 182.

⁸³ *Ibid.* Cf. Salomons, “De rol van de Amsterdamse burgerbeweging,” 213.

⁸⁴ Kernkamp, *De Regeeringe van Amsterdam*, 187.

Several regents opposed this proposal. The idea was quickly abandoned before it became publicly known. For now, all plans concerning resignation were postponed and would remain secret, even after the delegates in the States of Holland agreed that it would be a good idea to lay down all offices to prevent “insults, plundering and massacres”.⁸⁵

William the Mediator

The delegates in the meeting of the States of Holland had been debating the problem of the riotous citizens ever since 23 August. On 26 August, they saw that their biggest fear had come true. Not just individual cities but the entire province was in uproar. They conceded that something had to be done about the unrest in the cities and the waning authority of the regents. They turned to the prince of Orange for help. Two possible solutions were muted. Perhaps the movement could be suppressed by force (they used the phrase “justice and militia”). This option was discarded as soon as it was uttered. Justice, the delegates claimed, had no authority over a riotous and armed citizenry. The city militia could not be used against the citizenry, as had become clear during the last months. Besides, there was still a mighty enemy on Dutch soil, which meant that the deployment of the army was ruled out. This left only the other option: the way of persuasion. The regents were not particularly enthusiastic about this solution, but they saw no other possibility, since it could well be the last chance to save what was left of obedience to the remaining regents and to stop a deterioration of the authority of the stadholder, who, as the regents had learned, was not immune from the anger of the citizens. The stadholder would be asked to try to convince the riotous citizens that they were wrong. If that did not work – and this was expected – it was decided that the prince would be allowed to take away “the reason for the *burghers*’ discontent”.⁸⁶ In short: the prince of Orange was given the power to change local governments.

The cities could register to ask William to change their governments, which meant that those cities that did not see a purge as necessary could excuse themselves by not registering. Only Enkhuizen took this opportunity.⁸⁷ Gasper Fagel, who had succeeded Johan de Witt as grand pensionary on 20 August, concluded that this draconian measure was necessary

⁸⁵ Ibid., 183–185.

⁸⁶ Japikse, *Notulen*, 29–296.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 296–301.

“because the citizenry would otherwise start to complain again”.⁸⁸ Fagel added that the citizenry should be handled with caution.

Not all cities reacted positively. Delft thought that the prince should be allowed to remove regents from office, but that the appointment of new officeholders should take place “according to the privileges”. Leiden proposed confidentiality, “if this will not be kept a secret, the citizenry will demand more than we can give to please her”. The delegates from Leiden also thought, correctly, “that the first movement has been against those who had opposed the prince of Orange. Now they will remove anyone whom they do not like”.⁸⁹ Showing a complete lack of insight into the political reality of the time, the delegates from Den Briel proposed that the prince should simultaneously be given the power to punish citizens who had falsely accused regents.⁹⁰

Despite Leiden’s wish to keep the resolution secret, publications that revealed the plans were immediately put on the market. The Amsterdam city council, for example, decided to make this news known so they could publicly avert responsibility. “These men [the riotous citizens]”, declared the publication, “who think badly of government, know whom to address now”.⁹¹ Another publication explained to the readers the technicalities of the procedure for changing local governments. There were three scenarios wherein the prince could use this power: if the regents asked him to; if citizens and inhabitants asked him to; if the prince himself thought it necessary.⁹² Instead of calming down the citizenry, the news of the resolution caused more riots. The news also led to an explosion in the number of demands for political reform and caused the appearance of a host of pamphlets that provided the riotous movement with theoretical justification.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 301.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 299–300.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 301.

⁹¹ Kernkamp, *De Regeering van Amsterdam*, 192.

⁹² *Extract uyt de Resolutien van de Heeren Staten van Hollant ende West-Vriesland* (1672), Knuttel 10219, 1.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A PETITION DRESSED LIKE A DIALOGUE

Were citizens allowed to revolt? Were Dutch regents lawfully appointed? Was defiance against a political power also defiance of God? What gave simple citizens who did not understand all the intricacies of governance the right to take action? These are the questions with which many Dutchmen struggled in 1672.

Several groups of citizens who printed petitions added theoretical justifications to their publications. Some citizens in Leiden claimed in a petition filed on 8 September that political participation, and the benefits that were the result of filling offices, had been “an ancient custom” in their city that their government had cast aside over the last few years.¹ These citizens, who objected to the fact that offices in their town had been filled by “strangers”, argued that the laws of nature had been broken by this practice because “the offices and their benefits” had sprung from the city and thus from the citizens and should consequently not have been “divided according to the whims of the regents”. Until recently, claimed these citizens, whenever an office fell vacant, the mayor gave it to a family member or a foreigner. As a consequence, “an honest man had to stand in the back of the line, even if he had a house filled with children that were in need of support”.²

The second wave of petitions that had argued for capability for (and in) office was accompanied by a host of pamphlets that set out to defend the riotous movement by presenting it as part of Dutch political custom. This normal political practice was based on citizenship, participation through representation, popular sovereignty and an ambiguous notion of the need to defend good government. Pamphleteers used the language of rights and duties and were careful not to employ the term “resistance”.³

A prime example of a pamphlet that connected petitions with the political thought of citizens was *Verhael Van den wonderlijken Oproer, Voorgevallen in de Provincie van Mallanbruino*.⁴ In this utopian dialogue,

¹ *Eenige Pretensie*, Knuttel 10543, 3.

² *Ibid.*, 3–4.

³ Cf. Condren, “Liberty of Office”.

⁴ *Verhael Van den wonderlijken Oproer*, Knuttel 10600.



Fig 9. Inhabitants of Middelburg present a petition to local government. P.J. Beronicus, *Georgarchontomachie. Boeren en overheids-stryd* (Goes/Middelburg 1766).

three men (citizens Gijsbert, Dirck and Arent) discussed a dream that Gijsbert had had. He described his journey to the island of Mallanbruino (an analogy of Holland) in the South Pacific, where people had revolted against their own magistrates. After these revolts, explained Gijsbert, “choosing magistrates was done differently”. Dirck, the high-tempered member of the threesome, saw the similarities with the Dutch Republic and cried out, “I want our magistrate to give back the halls, fish-markets and houses of the city militia [...] We will make them give it back”.⁵

Next, Gijsbert explained how elections were organised in Mallanbruino, which told the pamphlet audience how the author would like elections in the Republic to be organised. In Mallanbruino, the citizens were divided into twenty companies. Each company consisted of two hundred men. Every company chose twenty representatives. These four hundred men, who were chosen for life, were called “The Chosen”. They appointed new regents when offices became vacant. There was a ritual for choosing new

⁵ Ibid.

regents: from every group of The Chosen, three men were singled out by drawing beans. These sixty men were called *Boonheren*. They made a double nomination from The Chosen out of which the prince of Kinorez (the prince of Orange) chose new regents.⁶

After Gijsbert had explained the system for appointing new office holders in Mallanbruino, the roles of the different characters in the dialogue became clear. Gijsbert was not yet the victor in their debate. He outlined the system, but the other characters provided necessary adjustments. Arent pointed out flaws in the system, claiming that it left room for “machinations” and that there were “no advantages for the citizenry”. Gijsbert replied that the people of Mallanbruino had implemented safeguards against the danger of machinations. “As soon as the candidates for vacant offices were chosen”, said Gijsbert, “they went into a room without speaking to anyone. Every man wrote the name of his preferred candidate on a piece of paper. The candidate with the most votes became a regent for the following year.” The additional safeguards employed by Mallanbruino to prevent manipulation of the system resembled demands in the petitions from August, September and October 1672. For example, no father and son, pair of brothers or uncle and nephew could be elected at the same time. Gijsbert also pointed out that “the citizenry appoint The Chosen, which meant that every citizen who would like to become chosen one day was obligated to make himself loved by the other citizens”.⁷

Dirck expressed his concern at the sporadic nature of the elections. How often would these elections be held? According to Gijsbert six of the thirty-six members of the city council were replaced each year. To prevent the emergence of an oligarchy, a regent who gave up his office could not hold another public office for the next three years. Arent lauded this rule: “for it is unbearable in a free republic to let someone in government all his life; in this way, decent citizens can compete to get a position at city hall”.⁸ According to Gijsbert, all groups in Mallanbruino were happy with the new system. The people were content with their substantial role in government. The regents, who were aware that they were magistrates for only a few years, stayed friendly and respectful towards the citizens, who

⁶ Ibid., 6. The system resembled the elective system of Venice in many ways, although the characters in this dialogue were, unlike in Venetian practice, particularly interested in the prevention of oligarchy. Cf. E. Haitzma Mulier, *The Myth of Venice and Dutch Republican Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, trans. G.T. Moran (Assen, 1980), 55.

⁷ *Verhael Van den wonderlijken Oproer*, Knuttel 10600, 6.

⁸ Ibid., 7.

could also become regents. The members of the city militia were equally happy because everyone who wanted a public office had to be member of the city militia, "which some of the regents until then had thought unworthy".⁹

The three men ultimately agreed that the system that Gijsbert had seen on the island of Mallanbruino was worth implementing in Holland. But changes in electoral procedure were not sufficient; clear safeguards and limitations on public offices were also needed. Gijsbert therefore explained the additional rights that the citizens on Mallanbruino had received. Again *Verhael van den wonderlijken Oproer* is an echo of the demands in the citizens' petitions. As all citizens wanted to control the government's expenditures, every citizen had to be present when the treasurers "closed the account" at the end of the year. There were fines for people who did not attend. Controlling government was a duty, not a right. Everyone on Mallanbruino had to pay taxes according to his income, not his status. Only natural-born citizens or citizens who had lived at least seven years in the city were eligible for public office. Citizens had to be at least thirty-six years old before they could become mayor. Aspiring officers for the city militia had to have been a member of a banner for at least three years. No laws could be made or abolished without the consent of the majority of the citizen's representatives "because in the past many times [laws] had been made for the private benefit of some gentleman".¹⁰

Dirck, who played the role of a riotous citizen in the dialogue, was impressed by the rules on Mallanbruino and claimed, "We rage and shout for puny rights, but we should get such privileges from our regents, who are too afraid to refuse anything in these times". Gijsbert, who was portrayed as more conservative, mockingly replied that the citizens would "become guardians of the regents" if they started to make demands. The citizen who proposed such a plan would be labelled "riotous". Dirck waved these scare tactics away: "I would have the guts to propose it, and I would have no doubts about a good result, especially, because I have heard that the citizens from Holland had a much bigger say in elections some years ago." None of the characters in the dialogue refuted Dirck's last comment, which therefore stands as a closing remark, the final frame of the dialogue. Dirck won the argument and showed the preferred interpretation of the dialogue. For a reader who followed Gijsbert's train of thought,

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

demanding changes would be riotous. In Dirck's argumentation, this was not significant as "there were no doubts about a good result".¹¹

The utopian pamphlet *Verhael van den wonderlijken Oproer* has been labelled an exception, for it portrayed a radical idea of representation of citizens in government. The Dutch historian Piet Geyl has stressed its uniqueness among the pamphlets of 1672.¹² Mallanbruino was, however, no exception. It was connected to a large-scale riotous movement that was visible on the streets during riots and in petitions (and other pamphlets) that were published in the same period. These publications claimed that participation in government (even if indirect) was part of the rights and duties of the citizens. This civic utopia was significant for it was in essence a petition dressed as a dialogue.

The Political Contract

Similar publications also appeared on the market. In a dialogue that was published at the same time, a member of the city militia elaborated on the working of politics in 1672. "Citizens have to carry the financial burden of the city and state, they have to fend off possible dangers during day and night. They even have to leave their cities and fight the enemy. Why would these men not enjoy their rights and privileges?" Why would they not resist the "evil government" that kept these privileges from them?¹³ The idea of rights and duties between rulers and ruled – a contract with possible accountability – was the essence of citizens' argumentation in 1672.¹⁴ This particular strand of political thought had been popular in the Dutch Republic ever since the Revolt.¹⁵ As a theory it was not particularly novel, but the way that Dutch citizens applied these ideas in practice left its mark on Dutch political culture in the late seventeenth century. On an unprecedented scale, political participation by joining the political debate became a way to oppose tyranny or oligarchy when bad government raised its head.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Geyl, "Democratische Tendenties in 1672," 103. For no apparent reason, Van de Klashorst has characterised this pamphlet as "a defence of De Witt". Klashorst, "De ware vrijheid, 1650–1672," 176.

¹³ *Wacht-Praetje*, Knuttel 10564.

¹⁴ Cf. Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt*.

¹⁵ Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt*.

For the defence of good government to function properly, however, the hurdle of mandatory obedience would have to be overcome. It was a widely shared political conviction during the early modern period – and arguably an orthodoxy during the period of the True Freedom – that politics was a complex, generally incomprehensible undertaking that could be properly understood by only the happy few. This secretive notion, or *arcana imperii*, led to a common political thought based on the notion that “regents knew best” and that the governed were not supposed to question policy because they were simply not capable of understanding politics as a consequence of lacking virtues, especially prudence.¹⁶ A much used metaphor to describe this relationship between rulers and ruled was that of the family. Regents should be seen as fathers or custodians who ruled over the governed as if they were children. Popular political intervention was futile because how could these citizens know whether they acted rightly, when they did not understand exactly what they revolted against?

The problem with the defence of good government was the absence of objective standards or judges by which to decide whether the context justified action. “Tyranny” was an early modern catchphrase, but the exact definition of a tyrant remained problematic.¹⁷ Governments would usually deny their tyrannical tendencies, while the governed (or oppressed) were more likely to claim that disobedience was needed. In the Dutch context, discussion of this problem, a very old one indeed, has usually involved citing the political theorist Johannes Althusius, who experienced the Dutch Revolt and described the existence of lesser magistrates, or so-called ephors, who served as a safeguard against tyranny and could resist government if needed.¹⁸ The ambiguities in the notion of the ephors did not solve, however, the problem of resistance. It was not clear who these ephors were in the late seventeenth century or when they were supposed to act. As a consequence, many denied the possibility of popular revolt altogether, experimenting with the idea of indivisible sovereignty

¹⁶ P. Burke, “Tacitism, Scepticism, and Reason of State,” in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450–1700*, ed. J.H. Burns (Cambridge, 1991), 482; Blom, *Morality and Causality in Politics*, 166–171; Haitisma Mulier, *The Myth of Venice*, 120–123; Tuck, *Philosophy and government*, 126–127. Cf. Peacey, “The Print Culture of Parliament,” 3.

¹⁷ Cf. Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt*, 158–159; W. Weber, “‘What a Good Ruler Should Not Do’: Theoretical Limits of Royal Power in European Theories of Absolutism, 1500–1700,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 26, no. 4 (1995): 912.

¹⁸ R. von Friedeburg, “Althusius,” in *Dictionary of Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Dutch Philosophers*, ed. W. van Bunge (Bristol, 2003), 11–18.

and *raison d'état* arguments. In the Dutch Republic, this strand of political thought had to deal with the possibility of absolute sovereignty in a society that was not prone to accept such ideas, since as was repeatedly stated, their state was founded on revolt against an absolute tyrant.¹⁹ One pamphleteer addressed “those who still believed that citizens should be obedient under all circumstances, no matter how appalling government had ruled”. These writers, claimed the pamphleteer, should also condemn the founders of the Dutch Republic and the freedom that had they created “because it had been the citizens from Vlissingen, who had helped the prince of Orange during the Revolt despite the command of their magistrate not to do so”.²⁰

How to Recognise Necessity

Riotous citizens did not act out of bloodlust. Nor did the upheavals break out because ‘the people’ did not know any better than to use violence. Citizens purified their local governments because this was the most efficient way to reach their goal. But anyone who acted so rigorously obliged himself to investigate the rightfulness of his act.

Authors who supported the riotous citizens attacked the notion of the fatherly regent who knew best. They dismissed the idea of non-negotiable and automatic obedience while stressing the interdependence of governing and non-governing groups in society. Regents steered the ship and set the course, but the citizens were passengers, and whatever the regents did affected the entire ship. If the course was good, the passengers obeyed without a problem, but if the captains steered the vessel towards disaster, the passengers would not sit and wait.²¹ If a ship was in danger, the lieutenants and the common sailors were entitled to change course and correct the captain.²² Apparently, although the argument stayed implicit, citizens had little trouble understanding the impending doom for which their ship of state was heading in 1672.

The main players in Dutch politics were represented by several characters in a dialogue set on a ship called *Hollandia*. The steersman and his

¹⁹ Kossmann, *Political Thought in the Dutch Republic*, 45.

²⁰ *Kort Verhael, van den Oorspronck en onderganck der Loevesteynsche Factie*, Knuttel 10264, 10.

²¹ *Zeemans Praetje*, Knuttel 10234.

²² *Copie van een Brief*, Knuttel 10479, 19–20.

gang (Johan de Witt and his friends) opposed the shipmates (the riotous citizens). The steersmen had labelled the shipmates “rioters, scoundrels, dogs, rabble, plunderers and robbers” because they had stood up against them. According to the shipmates, however, all they had wanted to do was to “bring the ship into a safe harbour [...] be obedient to the ship owners and make an honest living as a sailor, to support wife and children, while causing trouble to no one”. The steersmen, claimed the shipmates, had tried to manoeuvre the ship secretly towards France during the last twenty years. When the shipmates tried to correct the chief steersman, however, he ordered them to be silent. The shipmates replied that they were also passengers on the ship. The course affected them as well, because it touched on their honour and oath, their wellbeing, and the wellbeing of their wives and children. The shipmates declared that while normally they were indeed supposed to be obedient, under specific circumstances, disobedience was permitted. In this particular case, the sailors had protected the ship and its cargo as well as the passengers’ bodies, lives and freedom. In short, the sailors had prevented slavery, which excused their actions.²³

Similar argumentation dominated the pamphlets that defended the citizens’ movement. In a dialogue involving a preacher, citizen and politician, the preacher urged the citizen to be obedient to government. The citizen replied that the preacher was right in most instances, but now “citizens could not keep their eyes closed and their hands in their pockets”. The citizens should counter the “bad ways” of their regents.²⁴ Another pamphleteer compared the citizens’ movement to a physician, who, when normal medicines do not work, was allowed to use drastic measures to save the patient.²⁵

Pamphleteers who argued “necessity breaks law” were aware of the risky nature of their claim. Necessity was similar to tyranny; its definition was all in the eye of the beholder. Normally it was government that probed the limits of the law, usually to levy new taxes or start a war. That in this case citizens posed the question of when it was necessary to break the law was out of the ordinary.²⁶

²³ *Eenvoudig Verhael*, Knuttel 10301, 2–6.

²⁴ *Oranje in 't Hart*, Knuttel 10268, 8.

²⁵ *Copie van een Brief*, Knuttel 10479, 17. The author was paraphrasing Cicero, who had written in *De Officiis*, “for the preservation of the body, rotten limbs must be separated”. Quoted in Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt*, 158.

²⁶ Cf. Tuck, *Philosophy and Government*; Weber, “What a Good Ruler Should Not Do”.

In 1672 pamphleteers found a creative answer to the question of how to recognise necessity in the political contract. The rights and privileges left little room for misinterpretation about what constituted bad governance. By implication, citizens could also determine when they were permitted to protect themselves against such bad governance. The most important task of government, argued the author of *Het Rechte Fondament*, was the protection of the citizens and their freedoms, privileges and religion against all “inconvenience, violence and tyranny”. Government had no excuse for failing at this task; it had to protect the citizens “at the expense of government officials’ own lives, if necessary”.²⁷ This also meant, however, that citizens were forced to obey this government. The pamphleteer claimed that citizens had to honour regents “as fathers of the fatherland who should be obeyed and protected”. Anyone who insulted any regent’s person, office, honour or belongings should be punished for *Crimen Laese Majestatis* and treated as a rebel against the fatherland. Both rulers and ruled should be punished if they failed to uphold their part of the oath and mutual promises. Both parties were “bound to each other”.²⁸ The issue had ceased to be the inability to understand politics and the consequent inability to understand allowable resistance. Instead, this pamphleteer formulated a clear set of rules that regents and the governed should obey. The question was no longer “had necessity nullified the law?”, a situation that did not necessarily presuppose misbehaviour by regents. Instead, the problem was defined in judicial terms: the law was no longer relevant for one party in the contract of government because the other party had made the contract obsolete by not fulfilling its part of the agreement.

These pamphleteers accused their own government of contractual breach. Firstly, however, the other party, the citizens, was examined. Had they fulfilled their duties? According to many pamphlet writers, they had. Had they paid all their taxes? According to one pamphleteer, taxes had been paid “even if the children hardly had any bread to eat”.²⁹ Had they been obedient to government? Citizens had been ordered to “fight against the enemy and not one disobeyed”. The pamphleteer thought that the Dutch citizens had obeyed their government “more even than they have obeyed God”.³⁰ Another pamphleteer wrote that the riotous citizens

²⁷ H.R.a.L.K., *Het Rechte Fondament*, Knuttel 10309.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

were entitled to their actions because they had “gone to the front, left their shops and trade”. In short, they had fulfilled their duties.³¹

These pamphleteers had a less sympathetic view of government. They repeated many of the arguments that had been advanced during the Orangist campaign to undermine the True Freedom in order to prove that government had not kept its part of the contract. Writers added corruption to the long list of grievances. For example, magistrates liked to flaunt their *aensienlijckheyt*. In order to govern an *aensienlijcke* state, however, money was needed. Since regents preferred not to use their own money, and the rabble had no money, the citizenry had to pay for everything. To get away with this scheme, government had formed cabals, which meant that offices were filled only by people sufficiently trusted by the other regents to be let into the scheme.³² One author concluded, “Regents should govern well, or they should not govern at all”.³³

This analysis of Dutch politics led the defenders of the citizens’ movement to the most favourable conclusion imaginable: the citizens, who had kept their end of the political contract, had every right to disobey and resist government, who had not kept their end of the political contract and were consequently no longer permitted to enjoy their privileges, i.e. to govern.³⁴ The laws no longer applied because the governmental contract had been broken. It was important for these arguments that citizens were not just a loosely bound group of subjects (*multitudo*); they were a privileged part of the political body (*populos*).³⁵ Not everyone was included in this particular strand of political thought, which was based on rights and duties. Political participation was limited to “good citizens and inhabitants”. Authors explicitly excluded the rabble (*canailje*) from the political contract.³⁶ The right of disobedience could only be earned by performing duties for the fatherland. To stress the importance of citizens as participants in the political sphere, as opposed to the ill-defined category of “the people”, one of these pamphleteers explicitly addressed his pamphlet “*Pro Populo Principisico*”.³⁷ The pamphleteer made his intention clear again

³¹ *De Hollandtsche Burgery*, Knuttel 10619, 7–8.

³² *Kort Verhael, van den Oorspronck en onderganck der Loevesteynsche Factie*, Knuttel 10264, 8. Cf. H.R.a.L.K., *Het Rechte Fondament*, Knuttel 10309.

³³ *Kort Verhael, van den Oorspronck en onderganck der Loevesteynsche Factie*, Knuttel 10264, 10.

³⁴ H.R.a.L.K., *Het Rechte Fondament*, Knuttel 10309.

³⁵ *Copie van een Brief*, Knuttel 10479, 17.

³⁶ H.R.a.L.K., *Het Rechte Fondament*, Knuttel 10309.

³⁷ *Copie van een Brief*, Knuttel 10479.

when he wrote, "This has not been done by the rabble, but by the most important and respectable citizens, *non a Plebe, sed a Populo*".³⁸ Another pamphleteer recorded, "Necessity healed all differences by the power of the single word citizen that tied all hearts together".³⁹

Regent = Citizen

Once it had been established that citizens were a crucial part of politics, it was but a small step to claim that there was hardly any difference between citizens and regents. Some pamphleteers abandoned the idea of *arcana imperii* altogether, which led one author to argue that citizens were simply not made to obey automatically, "because it is not understandable that God, who is a keeper of people, should have made all people inferior to a few".⁴⁰ This thought was not new. The Dutch political thinker Aggadeus of Albada had claimed during the Revolt that "God had created all men free and equal." This view had not become part of seventeenth century public opinion,⁴¹ but several pamphleteers used this language in 1672. "Why should people who were born with common sense keep their mouths shut if they were mistreated?" wrote one of them.⁴² His point was that the difference between citizens and regents was nothing more than the simple fact that the latter held a high political office. Part and parcel of these arguments was the premise that sovereignty resided with the populace. In contrast to sixteenth century theories of popular sovereignty, however, the works of these authors were not ambiguous about the identity of the people. The people were the citizens in the cities who had taken over public life since June.⁴³

According to the author of *Copie van een Brief* regents did not hold sovereignty, they only represented it because regents represented the pool of citizens from which they had been appointed.⁴⁴ Since government only

³⁸ Ibid., 18.

³⁹ *Eenvoudig Burgerpraatje*, Knuttel 10014, 15–16.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 9. Cf. Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt*, 154–157.

⁴¹ Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt*, 154–157.

⁴² *Kort Verhael, van den Oorspronck en onderganck der Loevesteynsche Factie*, Knuttel 10264, 9.

⁴³ Cf. Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt*; E.H. Kossmann, "Volkssouvereiniteit aan het begin van het Nederlandse ancien regime," in *Politieke theorie en geschiedenis. Verspreide opstellen en voordrachten*, ed. E.H. Kossmann (Amsterdam, 1987), 61–63. Cf. H.R.a.L.K., *Het Rechte Fondament*, Knuttel 10309.

⁴⁴ *Copie van een Brief*, Knuttel 10479, 18.

represented sovereignty, the *imperium* and *potestas* were fundamentally invested in the *populo*. Whenever it was necessary for government to be changed, as was the case in 1672, this *populo* should take action.⁴⁵

“Whoever looks at the case with healthy judgement”, wrote another pamphleteer, “shall find that the citizens have acted correctly because the regents struggle for power that they usurp from the citizenry, while the citizens struggle for their rights and natural freedom.”⁴⁶ The general intention of the citizenry, claimed the pamphleteer, involved their “own preservation and wellbeing”, which by nature they could and had to “promote and search”.⁴⁷

Regents received their power from the citizenry and were therefore accountable to the citizenry for the performance of their duties. “Why should the citizenry not ask to be informed, if the political engine was misfiring? Why should citizens not articulate their interest, since they have not given up their political power, but only entrusted it to their regents?” The pamphleteer directly contrasted his political thought with notions of absolute sovereignty, writing, “The flatterers of kings claim that a monarch has to account to no one, except to God. This is, however, tyranny”. All government without accountability – significantly, he made no distinction between monarchies and republics – ended, according to the author, in death and murder. The Republic had witnessed this fact in 1672.⁴⁸

“You Stir, You Mute, Rebel”

September saw the beginning of a new phase in the battle over empty seats at city hall. Local rulers who had bounced back from the first blow from the riotous citizens challenged the idea of lawful resistance by openly attacking citizenship.

The English Quaker Stephen Crisp (1628–1692) travelled through the Dutch Republic, England and Germany between the 1660s and 1680s. As a young man, he had witnessed the English Civil War. He was married to a Dutch woman and often visited Amsterdam, so he was acquainted with

⁴⁵ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁶ *Kort Verhael, van den Oorspronck en onderganck der Loevesteynsche Factie*, Knuttel 10264, 9.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 6. Cf. *Decreet*, Knuttel 10620, 6; *Slapen De Boeren, soo vvaken de Gansen* (1672), Knuttel 10279.

Dutch governance. Crisp was shocked by the citizens who gathered in the houses of the city militia and held their debates in public. "O you citizens wake up and consider how you spend your time in your houses with your filthy discourses." Crisp claimed that these riotous citizens had not been "educated to understand politics". They should limit themselves to what they know: their shops and trade. "Think of what you men are doing, you stir, you mute, rebel, throw stones, plunder, cause indignity, and kill whoever you please, even your regents".⁴⁹

Crisp recorded his thoughts at a time when Amsterdam was, as a contemporary commentator remarked, only "a Mass Aniello away" from complete anarchy.⁵⁰ On 5 September, the mayors in Amsterdam had already complained about "the daily growing unrest of the citizenry". Regents had been threatened in the streets, at home and in publications. Mayor Johan van der Poll had received a threatening letter composed of cut-out letters glued on a white sheet of paper. From this anonymous document, Van der Poll could spell out that he was to resign from office or be "hit to death".⁵¹ Mayor Hendrik Hooft was given the same message by a man who came to his house claiming that he represented "thousands". Both mayors had to run for cover when angry Amsterdammers bombarded them with stones.⁵²

On 7 September, all men leaving church received an invitation to come to the Kloveniersdoelen that night to debate with "the citizens from Amsterdam".⁵³ About a hundred men attended the meeting. According to Hans Bontemantel, who had not been present himself, these were mostly "simple men" (although he listed more than twenty "*aensienlijke*" citizens).⁵⁴ When everyone was in, the door was closed and a packet of petitions was taken from under a chair. One of the citizens, Gerrit Claas van Fruyt, climbed on a table and read two petitions in a loud voice.⁵⁵ One petition was far more radical than the other. Because several citizens believed the first petition to be "too sharp", the second was chosen to be presented to the mayors and the prince of Orange.⁵⁶ This petition

⁴⁹ S. Crisp, *De Gronden en Oorsaeken*, Knuttel 10629, 10. Cf. *Vertrouwt op Godt, en doet u best* (1672), Tiele 6154.

⁵⁰ Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 675.

⁵¹ Kernkamp, *De Regeeringe van Amsterdam*, 189–192.

⁵² Ibid. Cf. Salomons, "De rol van de Amsterdamse burgerbeweging," 215.

⁵³ Kernkamp, *De Regeeringe van Amsterdam*, 198.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 199–207. Cf. Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 181.

⁵⁵ Kernkamp, *De Regeeringe van Amsterdam*, 200.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 201; *Aen haer Ed. Groot- Achtb*, Van der Wulp 4846; *Versoeck aen sijn Hoogheyt den Heere Prince van Oranje* (1672), Petit 3954. Cf. Salomons, "De rol van de Amsterdamse burgerbeweging," 215.

contained demands about changing the management of the city militia, about capability issues in local government and about transparent government.⁵⁷

After the demands had been read aloud, the document had to be signed. The pamphleteer Johan Blasius and printer Hendrik Boom started, however, to persuade people not to sign the document. This caused trouble because subsequently some men – the respectable citizens Pieter Godyn and Hendrick Kempenaer in particular – wanted to leave without signing their names to the document. A fight broke out at the door because people were locked inside until they signed the petition. It is not clear whether people were forced to sign the document, but the decision was taken to present the petition to the mayors. Four respectable (*aensienlijke*) men were commissioned for this act: Arent van der Weyde (occupation unknown), Jacob Danckers (pharmacist), Abraham Poot (doctor) and Daniel Smout (merchant).⁵⁸ A second group of citizens was to accompany these men to ensure that they would return with the petition. Apparently, they did not want this document with their names on it to be left in other hands. For safety, Van der Weyde took the signed petition to his home.

The next day Pieter Godyn, who had not wanted to sign the document in the first place, told Van der Weyde that he wanted his name removed from the document. Van der Weyde, Smout and Danckers also excused themselves from the commission to present the petition.⁵⁹ Hendrik Poot, Elias Nolet (a merchant in silk) and Johan van Bruynenburch were asked in their stead because they were considered equally *aensienlijck*.

This *aensienlijckheyt* was, however, an elusive concept. None of the Amsterdam regents had any idea who these four men were who came to see them with their petition. The men presented the demands to the magistrates nonetheless.⁶⁰ The magistrates replied that they could not satisfy any of the demands because the prince of Orange, not local government, was to decide on these matters now. Furthermore, the regents told them that a one-man commission had already been sent to meet

⁵⁷ *Aen haer Ed. Groot- Achth*, Van der Wulp 4846.

⁵⁸ Kernkamp, *De Regeeringe van Amsterdam*, 201.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 202–203.

⁶⁰ The petition that was eventually presented to the Amsterdam magistrate was signed with the initials A.v.P. [Abraham Poot], H.v.P. [Hendrik Poot], J.v.B. [Johan van Bruynenburch] and E.N. [Elias Nolet]. Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, byvoegselen 153. Cf. *Oprecht Verhael* (1672), Knuttel 10552.

with William. The four men replied that they did not trust the commission (it was secretary Schaep) that had been sent to the prince of Orange and that they wanted to send their own commission. The brothers Poot, Nolet and Bruynenburch were told in turn that they were not considered capable of speaking for the entire citizenry of Amsterdam.⁶¹ The regents argued that if they deemed these men capable, every day new groups of citizens would come to the city hall with new demands. The regents decided that three other citizens who were more respected (including Gerrit Claas van Fruyt, the composer of the petition) had to make sure that every banner of the city militia chose two capable men to represent it at a meeting with the prince of Orange. The regents told these men that they should include the captains of their city militia banners in their actions because they had close contact with the regents, which would make communication easier. The four citizens rejected this idea and replied that the captains were of no use to the members of the city militia since the citizens saw them as part of the city government. The four men proposed adding a list to the petition with the signatures of all the citizens who supported their claim. Many citizens signed this list, but many of the officers refused, as Poot had suspected.⁶²

“What do I Know about Petitions? I Understand them as much as My Cat.”

The meeting at the Kloveniersdoelen and the meeting at the city hall were followed up by a host of pamphlets. A series of pamphlets called *Wacht-Praetjes* supported the riotous city militia from Amsterdam.⁶³ These publications were in turn refuted by a series of pamphlets called the *Dam-Praetjes*, which supported local government. Both series were named after the place where the group they supported met: the city militia in their *Wachthuizen* and the magistrates at the city hall, on the *Dam*.

The *Dam-Praetjes* unveil how between September and November local governments reacted to riots throughout the Dutch Republic. The first *Dam-Praetje* was a debate among the characters Waermont, Geerlof and Hebrecht. Waermont (the eventual winner) claimed that many citizens in the cities were acting as “*Muytemackers*”, because they had revolted

⁶¹ Ibid., 2.

⁶² Valkenier, ‘t *Verwerde Europa*, byvoegselen 153; Kernkamp, *De Regeeringe van Amsterdam*, 207; Salomons, “De rol van de Amsterdamse burgerbeweging,” 216.

⁶³ *Wacht-Praetje Knuttel*, 10564; *Tweede Deel van 't Wacht-Praetje* (1672), Knuttel 10565.

against their rightful regents. Geerlof, who played the part of the riotous citizen, replied that citizens should obey government only if it produced good governance; they could not retrieve their rights and privileges by sitting still and obeying government.⁶⁴ This was completely irrelevant, said Waermont, because “the magistrates have been chosen according to the customs and rules of the cities, and [...] the magistrates are consequently lawful”.⁶⁵

Next, Waermont described the meeting at the Kloveniersdoelen at which the petition had been signed. The interpretation given by Hebrecht, like that of Waermont, was meant to be deemed correct. Translated literally his name means “I am right”. Where Geerlof had claimed that the meeting was filled with respectable citizens and had been conducted with dignity, Hebrecht claimed that the meeting had been conducted without order, that there had been only a small number of respectable citizens present and even that the petition had not been composed by these citizens at all – it had been “found under a pillow”. The citizens who had been present at the meeting had been “mostly artisans, as I myself and my peers are”. Hebrecht added, “What do I know about petitions? I understand them as much as my cat.” These men, claimed Hebrecht, could not understand the petition, but signed it anyway. The men who would not sign were kept hostage until they did so.⁶⁶

The pamphlet offered conflicting summaries of the controversial meeting at the Kloveniersdoelen. Waermont concluded that the description made clear that political decisions, in this case purges, should not be left to the common man. Since these men could not even organise a meeting, some citizens would always feel wronged by a regent. “One [citizen] is removed from office because of his bad behaviour, while another has requested an office and did not get it”. If citizens were to be allowed to decide whom to remove from office, “then we might as well send all regents home”. As a way out of this undesirable situation, Waermont enthusiastically rehashed the idea to which the radical pamphleteers had objected: obey the fathers. “That is why every citizen keeps quiet, and without hesitation obeys the law that God has given his people, that is, honour thy father (which also means civic fathers or government).”⁶⁷

⁶⁴ *Dam-Praetje*, Knuttel 10567, 3–4. Cf. Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 181.

⁶⁵ *Dam-Praetje*, Knuttel 10567, 4.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 7–9.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

Government propaganda often repeated that the riotous movement would destroy Dutch politics.⁶⁸ The pamphlets with this message showed that the negative sides of accountability were portrayed as well. Jacob van Beveren, lord of Zwijndrecht, was accused of misusing tax money. One of his accusers had suggested that fraudulent regents should reimburse the citizens for all community-financed projects that were “without use”. Van Beveren employed this accusation to criticise the riotous citizens. He wrote, “The irreparable consequence for the citizenry will be that regents will no longer take the initiative to produce public works, for fear of having to pay for the project themselves if, at one time in the future, someone would think badly of it”.⁶⁹

Governmental propagandists attacked citizenship. Johan Fidelis (a pseudonym) objected to the idea to “spare the wolves”. The only answer to riots was violence, even though such a response would inevitably lead to “subjecting the sheep to cruelty”. Violence could not be avoided. Did not necessity allow one to break the law?⁷⁰ The citizens’ argument was thrown back in their faces.

Poot versus Boom

A direct refutation of the *Dam-Praetjes* and similar governmental propaganda was never written. It would be incorrect, however, to think that the citizens who produced the *Wacht-Praetjes* were incapable of defending themselves against this pro-government campaign.⁷¹ On the contrary, the citizens who had been present at the Kloveniersdoelen published a whole array of pamphlets. These publications were, however, no longer aimed directly at government but at one another.

From these pamphlets it becomes clear that the riotous citizens were far from peaceful or united. The movement broke apart after citizen representative Abraham Poot and printer Hendrik Boom got into a fight at

⁶⁸ Borrebach, *De Haegsche Anatomie*, Knuttel 10403, 12; *d'Ontdekte Ambassade*, Knuttel 10466; *t Vervloekte Zevental* (1672), Tiele 6155; Fidelis, *Hollants Mars-Banquet*, Knuttel 10308, 14.

⁶⁹ *Deductie ende vertoogh by M. Jacob van Beveren* (1672), Rotterdam City Library Pamphlet Collection 240.

⁷⁰ Fidelis, *Hollants Mars-Banquet*, Knuttel 10308, 9–11. Cf. *Vrymoedige Aenspraek*, Knuttel 10291.

⁷¹ Cf. Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 184; D. Sachse, “De democratische beweging in Amsterdam in het jaar 1672,” *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 62, no. 1 (1949); Salomons, “De rol van de Amsterdamse burgerbeweging,” 216–219.

Boom's print shop. Poot had called Boom and the pamphleteer Blasius, who had also been present at the Kloveniersdoelen, "spies". In light of their behaviour this was not an outrageous claim. Boom, however, became so upset that he threatened to hit Poot with an iron rod from his printing press.⁷² Although we do not have any details about the fight itself, we can make an educated guess about the issues at hand by comparing several pamphlets that appeared after the meeting in the Kloveniersdoelen and after the *Dam-Praetjes*.

It had been Poot who published a list of capable candidates on 10 September, the same day that the prince of Orange decided that all regents in Amsterdam had to lay down their offices and await his decision on the appointment of replacements that would follow the next day. The publication by the prince of Orange was read aloud in Amsterdam to inform the citizens.⁷³

Johan Blasius published two pamphlets to ridicule the nominations that came from the citizens. The first was *Roskam*, a pamphlet that was published by printer Boom in five editions. The pamphlet's full title serves as an indicator of Blasius's anger: "On the four useless ambassadors, representing some Labadists and other disturbers, sent to the mayors and regents of Amsterdam".⁷⁴ Blasius, who had been present at the meeting in the Kloveniersdoelen, was not aware that of the original four delegated citizens, only one had gone to the city hall. Only Poot had been a member of both groups. Blasius's pamphlet defended the Amsterdam city council and the magistrate ("wise and old regents") against the "rioters". If we consider Blasius to have been part of the league of pamphleteers that defended government, the debate that had at first sight ended with the *Dam-Praetjes*, actually continued. In Blasius's pamphlet, Poot was called "silly doctor" and "piss-examiner". The message that Blasius wanted to spread was clear: "let the rabble in other cities run around, riot and make laws as they please, but keep calm in this city".⁷⁵ Blasius advised the "loyal citizens" not to follow Poot and his friends with their riotous movement.

⁷² Kernkamp, *De Regeeringe van Amsterdam*, 206.

⁷³ Cf. Abraham Poot, *Naerdere en Oprechte Lijste* (1672), Tiele 6477; *Nadere en oprechte Lijste* (1672), Tiele 6478; *Den Prince van Oranje* (1672), Knuttel 10556; Kernkamp, *De Regeeringe van Amsterdam*, 192, 208–211; *Op den 11 September 1672 zijn by Clock-geslagh der Stede Amsterdam* (1672), Knuttel 10558; Salomons, "De rol van de Amsterdamse burgerbeweging," 216–217.

⁷⁴ Blasius, *Roskam*, Van der Wulp 4849.

⁷⁵ Blasius, *Stock in 't Hondert*, Knuttel 10554.

Secondly, on 11 September Blasius published *Stock in 't Hondert*, writing about the nominations, "Eleven are crazy, eleven are quarrelsome and eleven are fish nor fowl".⁷⁶ That same day, a handwritten pamphlet calling the nominees a "house filled with madmen" was nailed to the door of the Jan Roompoortstoren, around the corner from printer Boom's print shop.⁷⁷ Another petition was stuck to the New Church. Gerrit Claas van Fruyt claimed that he had personally written under this list of nominations, "Of thirty three, eleven are crazy, and eleven cause quarrels. Eleven are fish nor fowl, see what a beautiful city council it is".⁷⁸

Four days later, the new regents were appointed. The faction of Gilles Valckenier (1623–1680) won the battle over governmental seats.⁷⁹ The new local government included seven relatives of Valckenier.⁸⁰ However, stress on the success of Valckenier's faction has clouded the fact that the riotous citizens had been successful in getting their representatives (their *aensienlijke* citizens) into government as well. Three citizens who had been nominated by the riotous citizens were appointed to an office: Dirk Blom, Michiel Tielens and David de Wilhem.⁸¹ Another clue also indicates that we should regard the purge in Amsterdam as a success for the riotous citizens. On 30 September, the third part of the *Wacht-Praetjes* appeared. The author repeated once again that the purpose of the purge had been "the peace and calm of the citizenry".⁸² But had this been the case in all cities?

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Kernkamp, *De Regeering van Amsterdam*, 184.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 207.

⁷⁹ Salomons, "De rol van de Amsterdamse burgerbeweging," 213.

⁸⁰ Roorda, *Partijen Factie*, 181.

⁸¹ J. Wagenaar, *Amsterdam in syne opkomst, aanwas, geschiedenissen, voorregten, koophandel, gebouwen, kerkenstaat, scholen, schutteryen, gilden en regeeringe*, XIII (Amsterdam, 1768), 200–218; *Burgerlijk Versoeck* (Tiele 6472).

⁸² *Derde Deel van 't Wacht-Praetje*, Knuttel 10566, 4.

CHAPTER NINE

THE DUTCH REPUBLIC AFTER THE PURGES

On Saturday, 3 September 1672, several members of the city militia marched to the city militia house in the Hague “to change government”.¹ At the militia house they made two lists: one with nominations for new captains of the city militia and one with nominations for new members of the city council. According to these citizens, their delegates in the States of Holland and the Delegated Councils had to step down because the current delegates were still “opposing the prince of Orange”.² The lists were sent to the prince of Orange and published.³ The prince answered the publication with a pamphlet of his own. He declared that he had chosen new regents in The Hague based on two sets of nominations: one from the former mayors of The Hague and one from the citizens. The eventual selection by the prince of Orange shows that the nominations by the citizens had been the guiding principle for his choice. Only four of the old regents survived the purge: Johan Rosa, Willem Rottermont, Pieter Pots and Dirck de Crae. Of these four, Rosa (who was related to Gaspar Fagel) had been on the citizen-made nomination list as well. Besides Rosa, the citizens had nominated twenty-three other men. Of this group fifteen men were eventually chosen for government posts. Many new officeholders had been part of the city militia. Among the new regents appointed on 4 September, we find four captains, two troop leaders and one colonel of the city militia. Not coincidentally, with these men, all the different banners of city militia in The Hague were represented in local government, although two of them had originally not been nominated by the citizens themselves. The prince of Orange evidently took civic representation at least as seriously as did the citizens themselves.⁴

¹ Gonnet, *Briefwisseling tusschen de gebroeders Van der Goes*. Tweede Deel, 410.

² Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 759.

³ *Lyste van de nominatie, genomen by de gesamentlijke Schutterij van 's Gravenhagen* (1672), Tiele 6460. Cf. H.E. van Gelder, “Schutterij en Magistraat in 1672,” *Die Haghe* (1937), 68.

⁴ Gelder, “Schutterij en Magistraat in 1672,” 65; *Lijste van de Nominatie*, Petit 3951; *Lyste*, Knuttel 10542; *Lyste Van de Verkooren Vroetschappen van 's Gravenhage* (1672), Knuttel 10542. Cf. Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 243.



Fig 10. Citizens in Rotterdam putting their signatures under a petition (1784). Atlas van Stolk, Rotterdam 4497.

It is not unthinkable that several men who had played a part in the murders of Johan and Cornelis de Witt were at this moment rewarded. Johan van Banchem received the office of bailiff. Heymen van Beuckelaer, one of the men who had discussed the murderous plans of Verhoeff, became the new alderman.⁵

Citizens were not successful in all places. On one hand, there were cities where the prince of Orange did not replace a single regent, such as Enkhuizen, Purmerend and Alkmaar, or only replaced one, such as Schiedam. Not coincidentally, these were also the cities where citizens had been least angry with their regents. These were also cities without their own printed petitions. On the other hand, there were cities where more than half of all regents had to step down, such as Delft, Monnikendam, Hoorn and Brielle. Not all demands were met, but in cities such as Leiden, Vlissingen, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Middelburg, Dordrecht and Haarlem citizens could not be ignored. We can conclude that citizens were not powerless when it came time to divide up the positions.⁶

⁵ *Lyste*, Knuttel 10542; Van Gelder, "Schutterij en Magistraat in 1672," 69.

⁶ Roorda, *Partij en factie*, 225–227, 240–248; Troost, *Stadhouder-koning*, 98; Bijl, *Idee en Interest*. Wilhem Hendrick, Van der Wulp 4857; *Remonstrantie*, Knuttel 10579a, 3–7. Cf. Valkenier, *'t Verwerd Europa*, 755–756; Byvoegselen, 150–152.

826 Votes in Dordrecht

In Dordrecht, members of the city militia of the militia house of the Kromme-Elleboogsteeg started a riot that led to a purge during the first week of September. The militiamen cut the cushions from the seats in the city hall, arguing that the regents could do without because militiamen did not have cushions in their seats. The arms of the family De Witt and of the four mayors were removed from the organ in the grand church, and new flags were put on all city gates. Some men hung a portrait of the prince of Orange on the Groote Hoofd, depicting William with the stadholders's staff in his hand and with the inscription, "This is what I have waited for, therefore I guard day and night".⁷

In Dordrecht, the guilds were an essential part of the process of choosing new magistrates. On 5 September all the magistrates were told to lay down their offices by representatives of the guilds and city militia, who referred to a privilege granted by Philip of Burgundy in 1436.⁸ According to this privilege, the guilds could choose forty men (the *Veertigen*) from a pre-selected group of one hundred. In September 1672, 826 citizens from Dordrecht cast a vote in this election.⁹ Albrecht Nierop and Johan Wierts, who had been sent as representatives of the prince of Orange to several cities including Dordrecht, described the men who had chosen the *Veertigen* simply as "the citizenry".¹⁰ Besides new *Veertigen*, the citizens also chose new *Goede Luyden van den Achten*. This council was made up of two men from each of the four quarters of the city, which ensured the representation of most citizens.¹¹

In Dordrecht, as in many other cities, the prince of Orange took the nominations from citizens seriously.¹² In addition to producing a list of capable men, the guild members composed a pamphlet that was hung in several places in Dordrecht and warned that if Heer Pompe were made bailiff instead of Heer van Naaltwijk, they would break the former's neck.¹³

⁷ Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 735.

⁸ Cf. Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 168.

⁹ *Veertigen Geelgeerd*, Knuttel 10539.

¹⁰ *Verbael, van het gebesoingeerde* (1672), Knuttel 10541, 3. Albrecht Nierop (counsel in the Court of Holland) and Johan Wierts (counsel to the prince and exchequer) went to Dordrecht, Haarlem, Leiden and Gorinchem. Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 168.

¹¹ *Verbael, van het gebesoingeerde*, Knuttel 10541.

¹² *Nominatie ende Verkiesinge der Veertigen, Achten, Oudt-Raden, en Schepenen der Stadt Dordrecht* (1672), Knuttel 10540. Cf. *Op het scherpsinnig Kaart-spel Der Grooten; Genaamt l'Hombre* (1672), Petit 3901.

¹³ Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 735.

From the forty members of the city council, William replaced fourteen. All the men who had been found suspect by the citizens in July were dismissed.¹⁴

Vlissingen

In Vlissingen, a group of citizens crossed swords with the regent Gaspar Ingels (1627–1681), who had, claimed the citizens, “ruled as a despot”. “There was no office vacant”, wrote these citizens, or “it was filled by a minor relative of a regent, or by a stranger, who had paid for it, or by a nephew from the bailiff”.¹⁵ To counter Ingels, the citizens had come together and had chosen eleven men, all of them respectable and *aensienlijck*. On 14 July these men published fourteen articles that were presented to the prince of Orange on 5 August by a delegation made up of Barent Lambrechtsz, Bartholomeus Reyniersz and Carel van Poelvelt.¹⁶ Their most important complaint was that most officeholders were related to each other. Seen individually these men were not necessarily thought incapable, but they were deemed incapable for office collectively. The citizens demanded that family members could not be in the city council at the same time, which in this case excluded nine city council members from office.

The prince of Orange was in a tight spot because he had personally been involved in appointing Gaspar Ingels. William took his role as mediator between citizens and government seriously. He reacted positively to some of the demands, but he also reached out to his old protégé Ingels. William proposed that new members of local government could not be appointed if they were related to the men who already held office.¹⁷ This solution was not accepted by the Vlissingers. On 13 September, they presented new demands. The citizens still insisted that the nine related members of government be removed, but now they accepted that four of them could be re-nominated. Again they made crystal clear that these men were considered incapable for office because they were related. If just one of them was chosen for government, that would pose no problem for these citizens. As a last resort, Ingels had liquored up the deans of the guilds and

¹⁴ Cf. Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 168–169.

¹⁵ *Remonstrantie*, Knuttel 10579a, 3–5. Cf. Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 225.

¹⁶ *Remonstrantie*, Knuttel 10579a, 5–6.

¹⁷ Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 225–226; *Remonstrantie*, Knuttel 10579a, 7; Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 755–756.

scared them with the idea that should the prince of Orange decide on the new regents, eventually the duke of York, who would succeed the prince of Orange, would make sure that the people of Vlissingen were shipped off to Barbados. Despite these threats, a third set of demands and nominations was sent to the prince of Orange in October. William still tried to please both parties, by firing all nine relatives but including all of them on the shortlist for new government posts.¹⁸

Haarlem: "They Had No More Authority than the Least among the Citizens"

In Haarlem, a group of citizens had formed a committee of twenty-four representatives. On 30 August three of these representatives and a group of citizens came together at The Pelikaan inn, where they drafted a petition in two parts.¹⁹ The composers of the petition presented the document to the corporals of the city militia for their approval.²⁰ The next day, the petition was presented to the mayors. The magistrates considered the document important and decided to formulate an answer.²¹ To calm down the citizens, the magistrates decided to "orally publish" an answer from the front of the city hall, where they promised to "maintain the privileges of the good citizenry" and to leave the decision on the new magistrates to the prince of Orange. The citizens were allowed to choose a small number of delegates to join the commission that went to the prince of Orange. Moreover, the city militia received free beer at their houses.²²

We might think that the regents in Haarlem reacted positively to the petition. This reaction was, however, only a front. The next day, local government removed its mask and declared the petition "a failure" because it had not been clear who was represented. The prince of Orange had in the meantime sent two companies of soldiers to Haarlem to calm the city down. This plan failed miserably. The soldiers were refused entrance to the city by armed citizens. Citizens apprehended the regents, two of who, Lefebere and Deyman, initially escaped. Both were caught – Lefebere was found in the brewery Het Scheepje – and violently directed back to the city hall. According to the lawyer Petrus Langedult, it was "sheer luck" that

¹⁸ *Remonstrantie* Knuttel 10579a, 8–11; Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 226; Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 756.

¹⁹ *Requeste*, Knuttel 10546. Cf. Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 178.

²⁰ Langedult, *Kort verhaal*, 22.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

²² Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 177; Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 736.

these two were not murdered like the brothers De Witt.²³ At the city hall, the magistrates were forced to do what they had promised – maintain the citizens' privileges and let the prince of Orange decide on the demands and nominations for the new government. A committee was sent to William. The delegates Ten Hove and Van Rixtel talked to the prince of Orange for forty-five minutes, after which William promised to consider the case and declared that he wanted to hear the story from the entire city council. He also declared that the citizens had to obey their regents and that they had to let the soldiers who were still waiting outside the city gates into their city.²⁴

On Thursday, 8 September, a meeting at one of the headquarters of the city militia was attended by all the riotous citizens. The *Krijgsraad* asked the citizens to allow in William's soldiers. Most citizens refused.²⁵ After the mayors put the suspect regent Deyman on a nomination list for new officeholders, a new riot broke out. A preacher told the armed citizens: "Well men, we fight with prayers, while you fight with weapons".²⁶

The entire city militia eventually went to one of their headquarters where they dismissed their regents whom they accused of being "traitors and perpetual-edict-swearers". From each of the eight banners three representatives were chosen. These men had a meeting at the headquarters where they decided to let the companies of the prince of Orange into the city. Absurdly enough, however, the city militia filed in two ranks and let the soldiers march through the city gate between them to the market. Some citizens who did not trust the companies led the two companies past the market, through another gate and out of town again.²⁷

The citizens decided that in addition to the city council, the *Krijgsraad* would have to be reformed. The members of the city militia collected all regents from their houses and forced them to organise an emergency meeting at the city hall, where Daniël Kloribus and Willem van Nieuwenhuizen represented the citizens. They asked the regents to lay down their offices. The regents – who replied that they had justly governed over their citizens like fathers over their children – did as they were told. Besides firing all regents and getting the city keys, the militia made all regents say out loud that "they had no more authority than the least among

²³ Langedult, *Kort verhaal*, 24.

²⁴ Ibid; Valkenier, *t Verwerde Europa*, 737.

²⁵ Langedult, *Kort verhaal*, 25.

²⁶ Ibid., 24–25.

²⁷ Ibid., 25–26.

the citizens".²⁸ The twenty-four delegates were given interim power over the city. Their first task was to make a nomination for a new government and a new *Krijgsraad*. On 14 September, the prince of Orange made his choice for the new city council. He replaced only one man. In a publication, William declared that he had based his decision for the new magistrates on two sources: firstly, on advice from Albrecht Nierop and Johan Wierds and secondly, on the petition that had been filed by the city militia.²⁹ Why would William claim that he had listened to the citizens if he replaced only one regent? The answer lies in the petition that had been drafted by the citizens. Most importantly, these men had desired an independent *Krijgsraad* and that is exactly what they received. Save for two men, all the nominated candidates were appointed by the prince of Orange. And although the prince had decided to keep the rule that members of the city council could also be captains of the *Krijgsraad*, he arranged for these captains and lieutenants of the *Krijgsraad* to be chosen by a commission that was to be formed by the citizens themselves. The independent *Krijgsraad* was a fact in Haarlem. Apparently, this was enough to keep the changes in local government limited. Moreover, eight of the men who were nominated by the burghers entered the city council shortly thereafter. At least two of these men had actively participated in the riots.³⁰

These examples from Dordrecht, Vlissingen and Haarlem show that citizens played a large part in the political purifications of the fall of 1672. Such a role was not accepted by all. For Ulricus Huber (1636–1691), the famous professor of law at the University of Franeker, in the province of Friesland, it was clear: regents had the right to reform government, but citizens did not. If a citizen wanted to reform government, he had the right to ask a regent. His influence stopped there, because "all magistrates were appointed by God".³¹

An anonymous pamphleteer agreed with Huber on principle, but he also thought that these citizens should have a say in choosing new magistrates this time only. Another pamphleteer specifically stressed the fact

²⁸ Valkenier, *'t Verwerde Europa*, 737; Langedult, *Kort verhaal*, 28–29.

²⁹ Valkenier, *'t Verwerde Europa*, 738; Langedult, *Kort verhaal*, 30–33; A. Nierop and J. Wierds, *Willem Henrick, by der gratien Godes Prince van Orange* (1672), Knuttel 10548.

³⁰ Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 179; Langedult, *Kort verhaal*, 33.

³¹ Huber wrote this pamphlet before any of his major contributions to the political thought of natural law had been published. Huber, *Spiegel Van Doleantie*, Knuttel 10591, 3. Cf. *De Haegsche Anatomie*, Knuttel 10403, 11–12.

that it should be a one-time occurrence – at this point these “governmental” pamphleteers copied the necessity- trumps-law argument – and choosing new magistrates should not be a new task of “the people” in the future.³²

It quickly became clear that William had given in to more of the citizens’ demands than just the appointment of new regents. The city of Veere can serve as an example. In Veere, citizens had sent a petition with thirty demands to the prince of Orange. On 3 October, William published his answer. The prince granted fourteen of these demands, while he denied eleven.³³ In five cases, William did not answer but referred the decision to local government. The eleven demands that were denied were mostly not granted because they were counter to privileges, turned down therefore on technicalities, not principle. William, for example, denied that a stranger who aspired to public office needed to have been a citizen and a member of the city militia for ten years before he was deemed capable for office and claimed instead that three years of citizenship, membership of a city militia and membership of the reformed religion were sufficient. The demand that the town secretary could no longer be a member of the city council violated “one of the liberties of the city”, while the idea that the accounts should be shown to delegates from the guilds was not granted because William believed that these delegates should come from the new government. Similarly, the proposal that two citizens were to control tax collection was dismissed because the magistrates were already forced to publish the tax accounts at the end of the year. William did deny one demand on principle: to the suggestion that city keys be kept by the citizens instead of the mayors, he responded that he would react with violence if the citizens tried to take the keys as had happened in other cities.³⁴

The point is clear: William denied some demands, but he also granted many of the wishes that had been part of the civic movement at large. Citizens in many cities were granted “their privileges”. Widows, orphans and citizens were promised a fair legal system. Corrupt regents were forced to show their accounts or be banned from the city altogether. Resolutions from the city council had to be made publicly accessible, while the accounts of the yearly taxes and lottery should be published.

³² *Requeste*, Tiele 6506, 5.

³³ *Ordonnantie Knuttel*, 10578.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

All “machinations and cabals”, shorthand for factions in government, were to be abolished immediately. Moreover, cities should be brought into a state of defence as if the enemy stood on the doorstep. Perhaps most tellingly of all, William agreed to abolish a thirty-two-year-old resolution that stipulated that a political office could not go to a citizen when a regent wanted it.³⁵

Fundamental Laws

Most Dutch political thinkers and governors in the seventeenth century agreed that it was absolutely impossible to change fundamental laws, let alone create new ones. Still, this is exactly what happened in Middelburg and Leeuwarden. Fundamental laws had been written down once with the intention that they be never changed. In practice, laws were altered all the time, but this was not acknowledged publicly. At the end of 1672 and beginning of 1673, public measures were necessary, however, to appease the riotous citizens and to stress that this was a one-time event.

On one hand, Pieter de Huybert from Middelburg used the axiom of fundamental laws to argue that the stadholderate was part of the foundation of the Dutch Republic and that this office should therefore be restored immediately.³⁶ The Frisian Ulricus Huber, on the other hand, used the fundamental laws to argue that “the people” were under no circumstances allowed to disobey government in the province of Friesland, let alone change its structure, laws or management.³⁷ Yet in both Middelburg and Friesland, several demands in petitions were turned into new fundamental laws.

We have already seen that the prince of Orange had changed sides in the political struggle in Middelburg, where William had openly supported the rebellious citizens. Backed by William, these citizens had filed a petition on 1 October, which the magistrates answered on 11 October.³⁸ To reinstate the desired relationship of obedience between rulers and ruled, the magistrates declared in their answer that many of the demands were to be made into “laws”. Consequently, of the forty-nine demands in the petition,

³⁵ *Verbael, van het gebesoingeerde*, Knuttel 10541, 4; *Ordonnantie*, Knuttel 10578.

³⁶ De Huybert, *Verdediging Van de Oude Hollantsche Regeringh*, Knuttel 9970a, 172–173, 98.

³⁷ Huber, *Spiegel Van Doleantie*, Knuttel 10591.

³⁸ *Remonstrantie*, Tiele 6493.

only four were denied. In addition, there were nine demands to which the magistrates were unwilling to reply, on which they claimed to have no authority or that were already part of local custom. To one of the demands – that the secretary should be replaced by a “capable” person – the magistrates declared that they wanted to debate the point further and in detail with the petitioners. Thirty-six demands were granted – an impressive number. These included demands limiting oligarchic tendencies in government. The magistrates, for example, promised to exclude suspect incapable regents from the nomination lists in the future and promised to promote “plurality of votes” on important decisions. In addition, the regents promised to make the proceedings of the meeting of the States of Zeeland publicly known. Many of the demands were meant to make the regents prove their commitment to the community. Most controversially, all the financial benefits that regents enjoyed from their offices were cut by twenty-five per cent.³⁹

Friesland

The structure of government in the province of Friesland was different from that in other Dutch provinces. Friesland was composed of three districts: Oostergo, Westergo and Zevenwolden. These districts were separated into so-called *grietenijen*, where delegates represented *grietmannen* (a specific type of landowner). As a result nearly ten per cent of all inhabitants of Friesland could cast a vote during elections. Representatives of these *grietenijen* and representatives of the cities were allowed a position in the Provincial States, which they called the *Landdag*. In total Friesland counted thirty *grietenijen* and eleven cities of which Leeuwarden, Dokkum, Franeker, and Sneek were the most important. These eleven cities delegated at least two members each to the *Landdag*, one representing the city council and one representing the magistrates.⁴⁰

Despite the more rural character of Friesland, there was a large riotous movement in the cities, which brought about changes in government similar to those in other provinces.⁴¹ On 12 September, a petition was

³⁹ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁰ Geyl, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse stam*, 93. Fockema Andrea, *De Nederlandse Staat*, 58–60; Fruin, *Geschiedenis der staatsinstellingen*, 96–99, 247–251; Kalma and De Vries, *Friesland in het rampjaar 1672*; Waterbolk, “Aspects of the Frisian Contribution”.

⁴¹ Kalma, *Friesland in het rampjaar 1672*, 103–114.

presented by a group of citizens and preachers in Leeuwarden. These men demanded fifty-three political changes that were inspired to a large extent by a similar movement in 1627.⁴² A response was published on 18 September by the delegates of the States of Friesland.⁴³ The delegates had decided that more research was necessary and on 28 September they formed a committee that deliberated for a week. In the meantime, a large riot had broken out in Leeuwarden, during which two companies of the citizen militia occupied the city hall. Mayor Blauw and city council member Willem Hagius from Leeuwarden, who acted as spokesmen for these citizens, handed over a petition to the delegates in the States of Friesland, telling them that these demands were to be “accepted without changes”.⁴⁴ According to one pamphleteer, Hagius and Blauw had asked the other regents in a threatening way “whether they knew what had happened recently in The Hague”.⁴⁵

In the meantime, citizens started shooting at the city hall. Albertina Agnes of Nassau (the princess dowager who played a role in Frisian politics) claimed that the riot had resembled a “hostage situation”.⁴⁶ These citizens remained in charge of Leeuwarden for three weeks, during which time regents were attacked on the street.⁴⁷ On 7 October, most of the demands for political change were accepted. For these changes to become effective, however, new elections were necessary. Debates about these elections caused a schism in Frisian politics. The abuse of the procuration (the custom that someone could be mandated as a delegate in the meeting of the province of Friesland) by *grietmannen* was an important issue. One group, with *grietman* Hans Willem van Aylva at its head, claimed that *grietmannen* should have a place in the States of Friesland. This group set up their base camp in Sneek, from where they organised a propaganda campaign against their opponents.⁴⁸ The group in Sneek was supported by the army and Albertina Agnes and was provided with theoretical underpinnings by the famous pamphlet *Spiegel van Doleantie* by

⁴² *Remonstrantie En respectie Poincten van Reformatie en Redres Voor de Steden in Frieslandt* (1672), Knuttel 10582; Kalma, *Friesland in het rampjaar 1672*, 107.

⁴³ *Besoignes Van de Reformatoire Poincten* (1672), Knuttel 10585.

⁴⁴ A. van Loo et al, *Deductie van de Redenen en Motiven* (1672), Tiele 6499, 8.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 10. Cf. Vierssen, *Missiven*, Van der Wulp 4873, 4.

⁴⁶ P. van Heiringen, *Verhael Van Eenige omstandigheden voorgevallen* (1672), Van Alphen 376, 1.

⁴⁷ Loo, *Deductie*, Tiele 6499, 17.

⁴⁸ Loo, *Deductie*, Tiele 6499; *Project ofte Voorslag van Middelen* (1672), Van der Wulp 4861.

Ulricus Huber.⁴⁹ The second group was based in Leeuwarden and was supported by most citizens and the collectively organised 156 preachers of Friesland.⁵⁰ These men objected to the idea that *grietmannen* could become delegates in political meetings. According to one of the propagandists of this group, the men who had fled to Sneek wrongfully thought that they “owned their offices”.⁵¹ Both groups claimed to be the legitimate States of Friesland.⁵²

Eventually this political standoff was solved by using mediators. Hendrik Casimir II van Nassau Dietz, the stadholder of Friesland and Groningen, declared in a pamphlet of 19 December that he was prepared to mediate, as long as his mother, Albertina Agnes, was not involved.⁵³ Other mediators came from the Orangist court and, as in 1627, from the States General.⁵⁴

On 25 March 1673, new fundamental laws were formulated to put an end to the unrest and political polarisation. These new laws, a hundred and five in total, were based on petitions from both sides. Many demands had literally become the law.⁵⁵ On 28 November, the group in Sneek had already declared that thirty-six of the petitioned political demands were to be made into fundamental laws. These new fundamental laws included a stricter religious policy, confirming the True Reformed Religion as the public church. Political offices were limited to those who were members of the proper religion. These men also had to be at least twenty-one years of age; they could hold only one office per person; they had to be inhabitants of the city where they held office. Furthermore, proceedings of political meetings were to be published, and financial benefits of several offices were reduced. In short, the campaign for capability that we have seen in all parts of the Dutch Republic was translated into fundamental laws in Friesland.⁵⁶

⁴⁹ Huber, *Spiegel Van Doleantie*, Knuttel 10591. Heiringen, *Verhael*, Van Alphen 376.

⁵⁰ *Beright*, Knuttel 10590; G. Kutsch, *Extract uyt de Notulen ende Resolutien van de Ed.Mog. Heeren Staten van Frieslandt* (1672), Knuttel 10588. Cf. *Leger-Praetje*, Knuttel 10603, 18; Groenhuis, *De predikanten*, 134.

⁵¹ Vierssen, *Missiven*, Van der Wulp 4873, 6.

⁵² Kalma, *Friesland in het rampjaar 1672*, 108–109.

⁵³ Ph. van Heiringa, *Contra Notificatie* (1672), Van Alphen 378. Cf. L. Holterman, “Vriend of vijand? De persoonlijke, politieke en militaire verhouding tussen de stadhouders Hendrik Casimir II van Nassau (1657–1696) en Willem III van Oranje (1650–1702),” *Jaarboek Oranje-Nassau Museum* (2003).

⁵⁴ Kalma, *Friesland in het rampjaar 1672*, 110.

⁵⁵ Kutsch, *Extract*, Knuttel 10588, 10.

⁵⁶ Loo, *Poincten Van Redres*, Knuttel 10587.

"Shut Up"

The new local governments operated with great care in the final weeks of 1672. In some cities, new regents signed their names under fundamental laws they solemnly promised never to change again. Nobody thought any more about the Perpetual Edict, also once presented as an unchangeable law. Citizens left the public squares and the market places. They went home and left their governments to rule once again. In most places, obedience and peace returned. The prince of Orange left the situation in the Republic as it was and took his army abroad, to attack France in the Southern Netherlands.

To ensure this renewed obedience, the prince of Orange and his publicists tried to regain control over pamphleteering while silencing dissenting voices. They let the Court of Holland ban the pamphlets *Leger-Praetje*, *Den Oprechten Patriot*, *Verhael van het Voornaemste* and *Het Hollants Venesoen*. All these publications supported the politics of the True Freedom and had criticised the prince of Orange and his propagandists. These pamphlets seem all to have come from the same circle of men. The names Isaak Naeranus, a printer from Rotterdam, and Joachim Oudaen kept coming up.⁵⁷ These pamphleteers tried to connect their own grievances to those of the citizens. The author of the *Leger-Praetje*, for example, indignantly pointed at the efforts of the Orangist campaign to turn the prince into a sovereign count "and make the free Hollanders into slaves".⁵⁸ According to the *Leger-Praetje*, published between 20 and 30 August, nothing had changed for the better in the Dutch Republic since the prince of Orange had been appointed to the office of stadholder. On the contrary, "with the former government, a citizen was heard because regents had family members in the citizenry. With these courtiers however, citizens had no one to turn to."⁵⁹

After attempting to grab the attention of the pamphlet audience, the pamphleteers set out to undo some of the damage that had been done by the campaign to undermine the True Freedom. Joachim Oudaen (1628–1692), the author of *Verhael van 't Voornaemste*, justified Dutch policy between 1650 and 1672. Oudaen, an eyewitness of the murders of Johan and Cornelis de Witt, had graduated from the Latin School in 1646.

⁵⁷ Weekhout, *Boekencensuur*, 197–206.

⁵⁸ *Leger-Praetje*, Knuttel 10603, 7.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 3–9.

Not long afterwards, he published his first play. From 1650 he worked as a clerk for the famous humanist Petrus Scriverius (1575–1660). Later, Oudaen moved to Rotterdam, where he bought a tile factory and established a large network of (academic) friends. Many men in his network were sympathetic towards the True Freedom, and Oudaen, who was also suspected of anti-Orangist feelings, published several anti-Orangist pamphlets. Oudaen did not publish any political works after 1672. His posthumously published play *Haagsche Broeder-moord* accused the prince of Orange of the murders of the brothers De Witt.⁶⁰

Oudaen argued that the English connection was a myth. Charles II, claimed the author, could not be trusted and had not waged war on the Dutch for the benefit of his nephew. On the contrary, evidence suggested that Charles had opposed William and had waged war because of his hatred of the Dutch.⁶¹ England had, for example, attacked the Dutch Republic as a reaction to the first appointment of the prince of Orange. Furthermore, the pamphleteer objected to the fact that the States of Holland had been blamed for much of what had gone wrong so far. Johan de Witt in particular should be posthumously lauded, he claimed, referring to Tacitus' words "*prospera omnes sibi vindicant, adversa uni imputantur*" (the credit of success is claimed by all, while a disaster is attributed to one alone). The pamphleteer therefore defended the policy of the True Freedom, claiming that the Dutch Republic had been excellently defended, especially by the Hollanders, and calling the adherents of the True Freedom "the loyal lovers of the fatherland".⁶²

This small group of authors claimed that Johan and Cornelis de Witt could not be accused of promoting their personal interest against the common good because the Dutch Republic was not a *Republica Platonis*, but "in sacre Rome". Referring to Francis Bacon's *The Advancement of Learning*, the pamphleteer wrote that the promotion of particular interest for financial gain could easily be integrated into public administration, as had been the practice in the Roman Republic. In general, the pamphleteer complained that people believed all the stories that had been spread to destroy the reputation of the "*Staatsche* government".⁶³ Pointing to the

⁶⁰ Tadema, J., "Een ambachtsman met 'beschaafde' hobby's: de dichter en verzamelaar Joachim Oudaan (1628–1692)," *De zeventiende eeuw* 20, no. 2 (2002): 209–219; J. Melles, *Joachim Oudaan. Heraut der verdraagzaamheid 1628–1692* (Utrecht, 1958), 84–91.

⁶¹ J. Oudaen, *Verhael Van 't Voornaemste*, Knuttel 10384, 10–12.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 13–19.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 20–22.

importance of public opinion – and the destructive force that it could have – the author of the *Leger-Praetje* argued that Orangism had gathered such a numerous following in the summer of 1672 because people “believed what everybody else said”.⁶⁴

The logical next step that these pamphleteers took was to stress the wickedness of the counsellors of the prince of Orange. “Everyday, people yell: Prince! Prince! but they do not see that the prince-lovers cut our throats”.⁶⁵ “I do not blame the prince himself, who is still young, and who is given counsel by men who seek their own interest, such as Rehabeam after king Solomon’s death”.⁶⁶ Some were less circumspect and also attacked William himself. The author of *Den Oprechten Patriot* was careful, however, not to use the words “prince” or “Orange”. Instead, he called the prince of Orange “*Vedder*” [father] and Orangists “*Vedder-mennekes*” [little father-men].⁶⁷ Others were more candid about their Orange aversion. The author of the *Leger-Praetje* went so far as to claim that the members of the House of Orange had not been the founders of the Dutch freedom at all. On the contrary, the House of Brederode had been much more important.⁶⁸ *The Hollants Venesoen*, published on 30 August, most probably again by Joachim Oudaen, attacked the prince of Orange directly, accusing him of treason in the same way that Johan and Cornelis de Witt had been accused. Oudaen claimed that the prince of Orange had tried to betray the Dutch Republic by helping France and England.⁶⁹

Lastly, these pamphleteers tried to look at the future and projected possible implications of the “new Orangist government”. It was particularly dangerous, claimed one of the pamphleteers, that the Orangist government had been founded on the destructive force of “the rabble”, which could easily “ruin the state”.⁷⁰ More importantly, one of the pamphleteers tried to convince the audience that equating patriotism with Orangism was a dangerous course.

The state can do easily without the prince of Orange, but the prince of Orange cannot do without the state. So whoever loves the prince as a

⁶⁴ *Leger-Praetje*, Knuttel 10603, 3.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁶⁷ *Den Oprechten Patriot*, Knuttel 10497, 6.

⁶⁸ *Leger-Praetje*, Knuttel 10603, 14.

⁶⁹ *Hollants Venesoen*, in *Engelandt gebaken, En geopent voor de Liefhebbers van Vaderlant* (1672), Knuttel 10606. Cf. For the authorship of the *Venesoen* see Weekhout, *Boekencensuur*, 197–206.

⁷⁰ *Den Oprechten Patriot*, Knuttel 10497, 6.

consequence of the fatherland is a true patriot, but who loves the fatherland as a consequence of the prince can never be a true patriot, because the prince can leave and die, which would also end the patriot. Seeking the common good, which never ends, is patriotism.⁷¹

Reactions to the "Louvesteynsch Beast"

This small campaign that defended the old government and criticised Orangists provoked a retaliatory Orangist bombardment with pamphlets. Orangist publicists tried to strike down all criticism by refuting these pamphlets with dozens of different publications and eventually a ban on pamphlets altogether. This Orangist campaign showed how pamphlets could be used to approach the same audience from different angles or, if necessary, different audiences through different forms. The pamphlet *Venesoen*, for one, incited seventeen different reactions within a month of its appearance, all of which were meant to refute the pamphlet in one way or another. Some took the shortest route and threatened the author of the *Venesoen*. "Stop harassing the prince of Orange, or you will be silenced by the sword or you will swing for it", wrote one pamphleteer.⁷² Another Orangist wrote that the author of the *Venesoen* should be "sent to his masters" (i.e. Johan and Cornelis de Witt).⁷³ A different author thought it strange that God had not yet "squashed the head of the author of the *Venesoen*".⁷⁴ Yet another writer claimed that he had his weapon aimed at the author of the *Venesoen* and the author of the *Leger-Praetje*.⁷⁵

Several Orangist propagandists simply insulted the authors of the pro-True Freedom pamphlets. One writer called the writer of the *Venesoen* a "Louvesteynsch beast".⁷⁶ Another pamphleteer attacked the *Verhael van het Voornaemste*, calling the pamphleteer a "liar, terrible pest and hypocrite of the state".⁷⁷ A character in a dialogue called the *Leger-Praetje* and the *Venesoen* "vile slander".⁷⁸ According to another pamphleteer, the writer of the "devilish *Venesoen*" had attacked the honour of the prince of

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² *T Ontdekte Vergift*, Knuttel 10616.

⁷³ *De Hollandtsche Burgery*, Knuttel 10619.

⁷⁴ *Wederlegginge*, Knuttel 10614.

⁷⁵ *Een Varsche Saus*, Knuttel 10617, 8.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ *Wederlegging-gedicht*, Knuttel 10387.

⁷⁸ *De drie Neerlantsche Juffers, Geschaect op de Parysse Bruyloft* (1672), Knuttel 10621.

Orange.⁷⁹ The shortest refutation came from a pamphleteer who had as his core argument “shut up”, which was also the title of his publication.⁸⁰

Besides threats and insults, pamphleteers also made sure that the arguments of the pro-True Freedom pamphlets were refuted. One pamphleteer claimed that the lies in the *Venesoen* were so blatantly obvious that everyone with the slightest knowledge could see its faulty argumentation.⁸¹ Another author simply took all the arguments and replaced William’s name with Johan de Witt’s.⁸²

Lastly, and of particular interest for the historian, several pamphleteers felt the need to flex their muscles and explain to the audience how overwhelmingly successfully their campaign was operating. In a dialogue, a character knew that pensionary Gaspar Fagel had “a pen ready to anatomise [the *Venesoen*] and to prevent the audience from sucking the poison from this pamphlet”.⁸³ Another pamphleteer revealed that “a respectable man is at the moment writing a refutation of [the *Verhael van het Voornaemste*]. So, I will not do so, but refer the audience to that publication”.⁸⁴ The pamphleteer also referred to another refutation, a pamphlet called *Orangie Banquet*, which would triumph over these pamphlets “as Hercules had won from Herbius”.⁸⁵

One author explained how this Orangist campaign worked. He had wanted to refute the *Venesoen* point by point with annotations in the margin, but since the prince of Orange and the States (for whom this particular pamphlet was profitable) were about to put a ban on the *Venesoen*, “its poison was not read by many”. The pamphleteer thought it more effective to refute the *Venesoen* by simply naming the most important counterarguments.⁸⁶ The inner working of the Orangist refutation campaign was explained by a second writer: “Every day we see several righteous publications and authors who show in abundance the innocence of the prince of Orange and the crimes of the traitors against the state and the person of the prince.”⁸⁷

⁷⁹ *Decreet*, Knuttel 10620, 7.

⁸⁰ *Houd den Beck, of Stock in ’t hondert* (1672), Tiele 6534.

⁸¹ *De Hollandtsche Burgery*, Knuttel 10619.

⁸² *Hollandts Venezoen, Verkeendt: Ende in een Oranjen Oven Herbakken* (1672), Knuttel 10612.

⁸³ *Niet goed Frans*, Knuttel 10625.

⁸⁴ *Hydra. Tweede Deel*, Knuttel 10602, 24.

⁸⁵ *De drie*, Knuttel 10621.

⁸⁶ *Wederlegginge*, Knuttel 10614, 4.

⁸⁷ *d'Oprechte*, Knuttel 10499, 6.

The last part of this campaign was a proclamation by William III himself, who had the Holland court officer ban the *Venesoen*, the *Leger-praetje* and the *Verhael van 't Voornaemste*. On 16 September, the court of Holland declared that “every day different seditious and slanderous little books and pasquils are written, printed and sold”. The court prohibited these three particular pamphlets because these had “disgraced his highness”.⁸⁸ The prince also lashed out at those who were not actively producing anti-government propaganda but were selling these publications for commercial profit. The Act explicitly mentioned that printers and booksellers could no longer hide behind the argument, “I did not read what I sold”.⁸⁹ The Court promised five hundred guilders for any information that would reveal the authors or printers of these pamphlets. In September three people were arrested for writing, printing and selling the *Venesoen*. Joachim Oudaen and Isaak Naeranus were also arrested and interrogated. Oudaen was quickly released, while Naeranus was imprisoned. In November he was released because there was not enough evidence that he had written or published the *Venesoen*.⁹⁰

With the Act of 16 September, the prince of Orange forbade all pamphlets in the province of Holland. After the Act, pamphleteers were confused about how to move on. There is a sense of resentment in the comments on the prince of Orange's ban on pamphlets. Writers and printers who had fought for the Orangist cause (whether this was intentional or coincidental with the cause of the writer) felt punished. In the pamphlet *d'Orangie Vlagge*, which was printed days before 16 September, the upcoming Act was discussed. The characters in this dialogue agreed that the Act was just, but they also believed that Orangist pamphleteers would be exempt from prosecution. “Surely, these little books should be burnt publicly, no matter how beautifully they rhyme”. The character Brillarus added that only “those who oppose the interest of his Highness and the fatherland should be exterminated”.⁹¹

When it became clear, however, that pamphleteering would be prohibited altogether, these pamphleteers felt betrayed. The character Boekaris fulminated, “Ban blue books now! Now, I say! Without distinguishing good from bad! I cannot see why”. The character Brillaris tried to calm his friend

⁸⁸ *Wilhelm Henrick* (1672), Knuttel 10605.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Weekhout, *Boekencensuur*, 197–206.

⁹¹ *d'Orangie vlagge*, Knuttel 10623, 11–12.

down. "No, my sweet Boekaris, they will differentiate. You will get an octroy and privilege on your pamphlets. Those who have a pure conscience should not fear justice".⁹²

This was not true. On 6 October, William published a renewed Act. The Act of 16 September had obviously not worked. In the renewed Act, William mentioned the "annoying seditions and slanderous books, pasquils and poems" and complained about the practice of distribution. Pamphlets were printed illegally, without the name of author or printer, after which they were anonymously distributed to the booksellers in all cities. From that moment on, promised William, every printer or bookseller who sold a pamphlet would be considered the producer of that publication.⁹³

The Act of Amnesty

If we take output numbers as an indicator of successful censorship – which is contentious at the least – the second Act was a great success. In November and December, the number of published pamphlets dropped to the level of the beginning of the year. Before we label the censorship of William a success, however, it should be added that a second and simultaneous Orangist strategy was more important for the renewed obedience and the return of internal peace – including the drop in pamphlet output – in the Dutch Republic. In addition to banning all pamphlets, the prince of Orange and the States of Holland had issued a general pardon. The oath between citizens and government that had been broken in the summer of 1672 was therefore renewed. The reason for resistance and revolt was taken away. This Act of Amnesty stated that all citizens who had revolted in 1672 were free from prosecution, but it also stated that rioting from that moment on would be punished with death. To stress that the old system of rights and duties was reinstated, the Act also explicitly mentioned that citizens were to pay their taxes again.⁹⁴ The States of Holland had already enforced this Act of Amnesty on 27 September, but it was not officially published – a request by William – until 8 November. This created the inconvenient situation of a period, from 27 September until

⁹² *Niet goed Frans*, Knuttel 10625, 3.

⁹³ Pots, *Publicatie*, Van der Wulp 4870.

⁹⁴ Beaumont, *De Staten*, Petit 3964.

8 November, when uncertainty reigned as to whether rioters were to be put to death or pardoned.

The Act of Amnesty has often been seen as a clever political trick by William, who supposedly used the citizens for the purges and then dumped them. It would be more correct, however, to see the Act of Amnesty as a renewed oath between regents and governed. It is particularly telling that one pamphleteer claimed that this renewed oath had been the citizens' most important political goal.⁹⁵

This oath could not be taken everywhere at the same time because of particular local circumstances. In Haarlem, where the report from Nierop and Wierts was published on 16 September, a new oath was taken by the city militia, while the new regents on their part publicly promised to "forgive and forget" everything that had happened.⁹⁶ Similarly, in Dordrecht all the parties that had played a role, including the citizens, sealed the new election with a renewed oath. The new secretary, aldermen, members of the city council and the *Goede Luyden van den Achten* all publicly promised to produce good governance.⁹⁷ A pamphleteer from Friesland claimed that politics in his province required a new political foundation. This new bond would bring about renewed trust and obedience from the inhabitants.⁹⁸

The murders of Johan and Cornelis de Witt kindled a wave of revolts in the Dutch Republic that led to violent political purifications in nearly all cities. The movement in Holland was quickly joined by cities in Zeeland and Friesland, peaked in September, and would not cease completely until the next year. Contrary to general assumptions, this riotous movement was not local, it was not Orangist by nature and it was not steered from "behind the curtain" by factions. Instead, it was countrywide, motivated by the concept of capability (a concept which included ideology and factional struggles) and organised – if organised at all – from different levels that cannot usefully be defined as being from above or from below. Citizens gathered by the hundreds at the meeting places of city militia, independent of government, to debate about the appointment of new regents. One petition after another was printed while local governments were purged on a large scale. Also, this riotous movement was not stopped from

⁹⁵ Oranje in 't Hart (1672), *Tiele* 6204, 4; *Hydra*, Knuttel 10601, 20.

⁹⁶ A. Nierop and J. Wierts, *Publicatie* (1672), Van der Wulp 4844.

⁹⁷ *Verbael, van het gebesoingeerde*, Knuttel 10541.

⁹⁸ Vierssen, *Missiven*, Van der Wulp 4873, 7–8.

above. Rather, several events, including a successful renewal of the contract on which government was based, led to renewed obedience of government and citizens during the last months of the year. The number of pamphlets returned to normal in this period. The Year of Disaster was over.

CONCLUSION

Although the rebellious movement did not disappear immediately after the purifications of local government, the number of pamphlets fell dramatically during the last months of 1672. November (31) and December (33) saw relatively normal monthly output numbers for the second half of the seventeenth century. This is remarkable because most inhabitants of Holland and Zeeland were at the time still convinced that their cities could be attacked at any moment. The French indeed plundered cities such as Woerden, Bodegraven and Zwammerdam. The plundering of Zwammerdam came to occupy a central place in Dutch propaganda as the national tragedy of the period. The *Spiegel der Fransche Tirannie* by artist Romeyn de Hooghe (1645–1708) would remain a common reference to this event until well into the twentieth century.¹

Although in hindsight we can safely say that the Dutch Republic had survived the worst, contemporaries were not aware of this fact. To a large extent, the discrepancy between actual panic and the relatively low output numbers for pamphlets after October 1672 can be explained by the fact that citizens' grievances had been addressed in several cities and the bond between rulers and ruled was – for the time being – restored in many cities. Riots did not disappear altogether. Regents were still attacked on the streets, but there was no third wave of revolts.²

There was another reason for the return of relative calm at the end of 1672: the prince of Orange took control of public life.³ In 1673, for example, William gathered all preachers in The Hague and asked them to “refrain from seditious preaching against government”.⁴ He increased censorship, and punished perpetrators vigorously, backed up by the Act of Amnesty. In 1673 a man from Delft was decapitated, and a man from IJsselmonde

¹ R. de Hooghe, *Spiegel der Fransche Tirannie* (1673). *Een Encouragement, en Verkloekmoedinge aen de Burgerye en Inwoonderen van Amsterdam* (1672), Tiele 6152; *Vertrouwt op Godt* (1672), Tiele 6154; Heemskerck, *Mijn Heeren* (1672), Petit 3978; J.D.W., *Trouwhertige Aensprake Aen de Burgers van Amsterdam* (1672), Knuttel 10239; Johan Witsen, *Myn Heeren van den Geregte serieuse reflexie makende* (1672), Van der Wulp 4785. Cf. Sypesteyn, *De verdediging van Nederland*, 196; Worp, *De Briefwisseling van Constantijn Huygens*, 316.

² Gonnet, *Briefwisseling tusschen de gebroeders Van der Goes*. Tweede Deel, 436; Japikse, *Notulen*, 340.

³ Van Deursen, *De last van veel geluk*, 323.

⁴ Colenbrander, *Baltische Archivalia*, 132–133.



Fig 11. The prince of Orange became stadholder of Utrecht in 1674. Atlas van Stolk, Rotterdam 2594.

whipped; both men had threatened newly appointed regents.⁵ This ruthless policy was combined with a jubilant Orangist pamphlet campaign about William's military campaign into the Southern Netherlands in November and December 1672.⁶ If we are to believe the pamphlet literature of those months, things were looking up.⁷

In reality, it would be two more years before the French armies were driven from Dutch soil completely. During these years, William strengthened his political position in several ways. First of all, the stadholderate in Holland and Zeeland was made hereditary for the Orange family in the direct male line, and William made sure that the new instruction for the stadholderate explicitly mentioned keeping the stadholder informed

⁵ Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 214.

⁶ *Marienbergh en Binchs* (1672), Knuttel 10524; *Relation veritable* (1672), Tiele 6451; *Waerachtigh Verhael* (1672), Petit 3977; J. van Beckef, *Bericht van den Marsch van zijn Hoogheyt* (1672), Tiele 6447; V.D.S.L., *De Siecke Bruydt* (1672), Van der Wulp 4912.

⁷ *Waerachtigh Verhael van de groote sterfte, en het miserabel begraven der Fransen* (1672), Tiele 6439; Bos, *Heyl en Zegen-Wensch* (1672), Knuttel 10636; C.v.M., *Hollands Geboorte-Vermaningh* (1672), Knuttel 10637.

about “all business of state”.⁸ Moreover, the States General made the office of captain-general hereditary, and William was made stadholder in Utrecht, Gelderland and Overijssel in 1674.⁹ In these provinces a new regulation of government was introduced that hugely increased the political power of the prince of Orange, most importantly by giving him the power to appoint new regents. As early as 14 December 1672, William published a pamphlet wherein he referred to himself as “hereditary marshal of Holland”.¹⁰

It has often been claimed that William's power became nearly absolute. In practice, however, William could not altogether ignore the people that he governed, even in Gelderland, Utrecht and Overijssel. When, for example, a man called Aquillius was appointed to the office of city secretary in Wageningen on 13 June 1674, a riot broke out because Aquillius had fled to Holland in 1672. When the steward told the riotous crowd that had gathered in front of the city hall to calm down because he spoke in the name of the prince of Orange, some citizens replied, “There is no prince of Orange here. There is no justice here.” The rioters preferred to settle this dispute themselves, without interference from William.¹¹ In 1675, William went too far when he made the province of Gelderland offer him the sovereign office of duke and the city of Zutphen offer him the office of count. This plan came from two of his advisors: Gaspar Fagel and Willem Bentinck. The delegates from Zeeland, Holland, Friesland and Groningen reacted furiously during the next meeting of the States General.¹² According to Herbert Rowen, as a result of this failed campaign “some of the magic of the Orange myth had been rubbed away”.¹³

This was not William's first attempt at political emancipation. From December 1672 onward, whenever the States General published anything, they added that the conclusion had been reached with advice from the prince of Orange.¹⁴ The plan to approach the French armies from the back

⁸ Troost, *Stadhouder-koning Willem III*, 108.

⁹ Wertheim-Gijse Weenink, *Democratische Bewegingen*, 28–31; C. Wilders, *Dienstbaarheid uit eigenbaat. Regenten in het makelaarsstelsel van stadhouder Willem III tijdens het Utrechts regeringsreglement, 1674–1702* (unpublished PhD thesis, Amsterdam, 2010).

¹⁰ Pots, *Publicatie* (1672), Van der Wulp 4870.

¹¹ *Lijste van de Nominatie* (1674), Petit 3951.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Rowen, *The Princes of Orange*, 138–140. Cf. L.J. Rogier, “De Ware Vrijheid als oligarchie, 1672–1747,” in *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* (Utrecht/Antwerp, 1954), 197; Troost, *Stadhouder-koning Willem III*, 116; Renier, *De Noord-Nederlandse Natie*, 238–240.

¹⁴ *Placcaet* (1672), Van der Wulp 4787.

and march on Charleroi at the end of 1672 was devised on 17 October 1672 without the knowledge of the States General.¹⁵ Moreover, William hugely enlarged the Dutch army to counter the French threat. By 1673, a hundred thousand soldiers were marching under the Dutch banner.¹⁶ This serves to show that William's attention had shifted towards foreign policy. Diplomatically his most important goal was a separate peace with England, which he eventually achieved. As a consequence of a successful Dutch propaganda campaign, public opinion in England had changed from "general support for the war against the Dutch Republic to unanimous condemnation".¹⁷ A peace with England was made on 19 February 1674. Treatises with Munster and Cologne followed on 22 April and 1 May. A peace with France was reached in Nijmegen in 1678.¹⁸ The war was over. People started to reflect on what had happened during the previous years. The historiography of the Year of Disaster commenced. With the passing of time, the riotous citizens' movement disappeared from Dutch collective memory.

The Inheritance of 1672

Instead of being depicted as the act of a crazy bloodthirsty mob, the murders of Johan and Cornelis de Witt could be more accurately described as an act of vigilantism by outraged citizens who, in their eyes, executed the law that the judges of the Court of Holland had failed to carry out. To give this assassination its proper place in early modern Western historiography, we must answer the question of how intelligent, generally successful politicians came to be the most hated men of their time. To assess this development, we can look at other "most-hated men" for comparisons. In the case of John Felton's assassination of George Villiers, the first duke of Buckingham, in England in 1628 and that of the exile of Thomas Hutchinson, who fled under popular pressure from America to England in the 1780s, popular political publications played as an important role as they had in the De Witt murders. Moreover, the inability (or failed attempts) of all the victims, all intelligent politicians, to engage

¹⁵ Cambier, *De jaren 1672 en 1673*, 45.

¹⁶ Van Deursen, *De last van veel geluk*, 317–326.

¹⁷ Haley, *William of Orange and the English Opposition 1672–4*, 5. Cf. Pincus, "From Butterboxes to Wooden Shoes", 333–334, 53.

¹⁸ A.H. Wertheim-Gijse Weenink, *Democratische Bewegingen in Gelderland 1672–1795* (Amsterdam, 1973), 26; Van Deursen, *De last van veel geluk*, 319.

successfully in the arena of printed propaganda warfare adds to the explanation of events.¹⁹

John Felton stabbed George Villiers, duke of Buckingham, to death on 23 August 1628 in Portsmouth. Buckingham was at that time the second most powerful man in England, and perhaps the most hated.²⁰ Many pamphlets were published against Buckingham before the murder. It was, for example, publicly claimed that Buckingham had poisoned King James.²¹ After his murder, the act was justified by contesting, among other things, the official publication of the open confession and repentance of Felton, who was hanged at Tyburn on 29 November 1628. Felton's repentance was spread by cheap printed pamphlets claiming to contain his last speech "word for word as he spoke it". The publication was meant to restore "the moral and political order".²² This official version of repentance was challenged by at least two alternative unauthorized versions that were constructed "in the literary underground". These publications changed the execution of a criminal "into a patriot hero's selfless sacrifice". The outcome was martyrdom, just as Jacob van der Graaf had been turned into a martyr with the help of Simonides's pamphlet.²³ Felton, like Jacob van der Graaf, was claimed to have been divinely ordained. In one particular poem, Felton "changes from God's instrument, to God's hand, to something quite like God himself".²⁴ Like Van der Graaf and Willem Tichelaar, John Felton himself played a limited role in the debate.²⁵

Like Buckingham and Johan and Cornelis de Witt, Thomas Hutchinson was "one of the most hated men on earth" in his own time. Hutchinson, a loyalist who became governor of Massachusetts at the advent of the American War of Independence, also suffered from a vicious propaganda

¹⁹ A. Bellany, "Libels in Action: Ritual, Subversion and the English Literary Underground, 1603–42," in *The Politics of the Excluded, c. 1500–1850*, ed. T. Harris (New York/Basingstoke, 2001); J. Holstun, "God bless thee, little David!: John Felton and His Allies," *ELS* 59, no. 3 (1992): 545, note 2; B. Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson. Loyatism and the Destruction of the First British Empire* (London, 1975). Cf. M. Greengrass, "Regicide, Martyrs and Monarchical Authority in France in the Wars of Religion," in *Murder and Monarchy. Regicide in European History 1300–1800*, ed. R. von Friedeburg (London, 2005); J. Stern, "Poison in Print: Pamphleteering and the Deaths of Concino Concini, Marquis D'ancre 1617 and Johan and Cornelis de Witt 1672," in *Pamphlets and Politics in the Dutch Republic*, ed. F. Deen, D. Onnekink and M. Reinders (Leiden, 2011), 121–142.

²⁰ Holstun, "God bless thee," 521.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 518–523.

²² Bellany, "Libels in Action," 107.

²³ *Ibid.*, 108.

²⁴ Holstun, "God bless thee," 537.

²⁵ Bellany, "Libels in Action," 106.

campaign against his person. Instead of being assassinated, however, Hutchinson died of a stroke on 3 June 1780 in exile in England. Still the comparison with events in 1672 in the Dutch Republic is significant. When Hutchinson was appointed as a judge to the high bench in 1763, it was written in the *Boston Gazette* that now “tyrannical laws were executed in a tyrannical manner”.²⁶ From 1766 on, Hutchinson was repeatedly attacked in newspapers for holding multiple offices, and the audience was warned that he was about to sacrifice the general welfare for his own personal benefit.²⁷ According to Hutchinson’s biographer Bernard Bailyn, “a mood of suspicion was created” and “a sense that he was in some way deeply corrupted”.²⁸ A subtle and particularly inventive use of popular political publications played a crucial role in spreading this message. While he was in exile in England, in late November 1775, Hutchinson’s house in Boston was occupied by the rebel army and his entire collection of personal papers was confiscated by the men who wished to harm him. Carefully selected parts of his correspondence were published to prove that Hutchinson was driven by the devil and his plans had been accordingly wicked. His own writings were published as pamphlets against him, just as the Perpetual Edict had been published in July 1672 to harm certain Dutch regents. Several of these incriminating letters were published in ten editions within a single year.²⁹ Hutchinson did compose refutations of attacks against his person. He lacked, however, the ability to prevent these rumours from growing into a general public condemnation. “Indeed, his finest qualities – respect for facts, prudence, candour, and scrupulous adherence to the spirit as well as the letter of the law – worked against him”.³⁰ Bailyn has claimed that Hutchinson “died in exile grieving for the world he had lost, because for all his intelligence, he did not comprehend the nature of the forces that confronted him and that, at a critical point he might have controlled, or if not controlled then at least evaded.”³¹ In this sense, Johan de Witt and Thomas Hutchinson were alike.

There is another larger point to be made here. Events such as the murders of Buckingham, Johan and Cornelis de Witt and the banishment of Thomas Hutchinson show the strength of ideological forces and the

²⁶ Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*, 373.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 112–115.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 54.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 224.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 54.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 378.

pressure-cooker atmosphere of ideological political clashes.³² As we seek to understand why Johan and Cornelis de Witt were murdered, it is not fruitful to describe the murderers as robots that could be turned on like a light bulb in a dark room. Instead, motivations of citizens have to be considered and incitement from above has to be dealt with more subtly. For example, pamphlets should be seen not as a simple matter of dispersing and receiving news but as a way of convincing by seeking and moving public opinion.

Success or Failure?

Adriaan Paets, the Dutch ambassador in Madrid, wrote to Johan de Witt on 20 July 1672:

Future generations will hardly be able to believe what happened. Those who will believe will damn the memory of us and will deny their origin from this degenerated nation, that is, from ancestors who have carelessly neglected the defence of a Republic that was unequalled in the world. Dear God, have there been no honest regents who preferred dying for the Republic to surrendering, or have attempts by honest men been prevented by traitors?³³

Paets was convinced in July that the Dutch Republic would not survive the French attack, and he was surely not alone in this belief. When Dutch citizens noticed that their regents could not avert the demise of their Republic, they took matters into their own hands. They claimed the same political principles as citizens outside their own cities, joined together by simultaneous riots in dozens of cities that became interconnected even more by the hundreds of publications that described, justified, commented on, and criticised the movement. This combination of street action and pamphlets transformed the local riots in 1672 into something out of the ordinary: a Dutch political culture that was not only local, but also provincial and at times 'national'.³⁴

As a consequence of this 'national' movement, the prince of Orange was reintroduced into Dutch politics, local regents who were deemed

³² Cf. Holstun, "God bless thee," 514–517, 543.

³³ Japikse, *Brieven aan Johan de Witt*. Tweede Deel, 694.

³⁴ Schilling, "Civic Republicanism," 3. Cf. M. Prak, "Citizen Radicalism and Democracy in the Dutch Republic: The Patriot Movement of the 1780s," *Theory and Society* 20, no. 1 (1991): 94; W.F. Wertheim and A.H. Wertheim-Gijse Weenink, *Burgers in verzet tegen regenten-heerschappij. Onrust in Sticht en Oversticht (1703–1706)* (Amsterdam, 1976), 429–430.

incapable were removed from office and new, capable regents were appointed. Men such as the Amsterdammer Lucas Watering, the Rotterdammer Jan van Schrieck and the Middelburger Aegidius Maillaert enthusiastically joined this movement, but they were not out to govern themselves. They only wanted to play their part in government. They explained their actions in traditional terms. Their movement was a far cry from modern notions of democracy. There was no equality for all, no general elections, no wish for all citizens to participate equally in politics. Widely shared notions of capability for and in office prevented any such claims.

There are some misconceptions about the Year of Disaster. For one, revisionist historians have claimed that the civic movement of 1672 was unsuccessful.³⁵ If, however, we measure the success of the movement by the standards of the rebellious citizens themselves, a different outcome emerges. Regents went out of their way to prove their capability in office after 1672. We may assume that the murders of Johan and Cornelis de Witt influenced Dutch politics for decades by instilling fear in regents. During the 1670s and 1680s, regents stressed the importance of rights and duties of citizens and government by publicly fulfilling their duties.³⁶

In Rotterdam regents put structures in place to communicate policy to the citizenry after 1672. In 1673, a commission in Rotterdam was formed to prevent machinations in the future.³⁷ In Monnickendam the new pensionary and new secretary were prohibited from joining the city council. In Leiden and Schiedam, regents took a new oath. In several cities family ties in government were effectively forbidden. In Haarlem the local privileges were printed and distributed among the citizens. In Schiedam the list of expenditures of the previous year's taxes was published, while in Middelburg, citizens were also granted their demand to control government finance. In a number of cities in Holland, such as Alkmaar, Purmerend, Medemblik, Brielle, Gorinchem, and Schoonhoven, the city council

³⁵ Roorda, *Partijen Factie*, 241; De Bruin, "De geschiedschrijving over de Gouden Eeuw," 115; Renier, *De Noord-Nederlandse Natie*, 243; Troost, *Stadhouder-koning Willem III*, 96. Cf. Knevel, *Burgers in het geweer*, 358–367; A. Munt, "The Impact of the rampjaar on Dutch Golden Age Culture," *Dutch Crossing* 21, no. 1 (1997): 3–51; Geyl, "Democratische Tendenties in 1672"; Sachse, "De democratische beweging in Amsterdam in het jaar 1672"; Wertheim-Gijse Weenink, *Democratische Bewegingen*.

³⁶ M. Reinders, "'Die dit biljet afscheurt, sal een Kogel tot vereeringh genieten'. Pamfletten, petities en publieke politiek in de late zeventiende eeuw", *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 14, no 1 (2010): 5–22.

³⁷ GAR, 1.01, 695

was enlarged during the next couple of years. One of the most radical changes was carried out in Dordrecht, where the *Oudt-Raad* and the *Veertigen* were for the first time in history separated. Members of this new *Veertigen* were chosen from a list of a hundred people that had been selected by citizens.³⁸ In Amsterdam regents showed that they had learned from the Year of Disaster. From 1673 on they personally joined the city militia during the night watch.³⁹

Political Participation

Another misconception about the Year of Disaster concerns Orangism. Rioters have been equated with Orangists. The goals of the prince and the riotous citizens were supposedly similar. If we look at the ideological shifts before, during and after 1672 in the Dutch Republic, we see that a more nuanced explanation is needed.

A political ideology such as Orangism was not only fabricated by political actors and their propagandists, it was also constructed by its recipients, if only as the subject of policies or as the audience of political communication. The fact that Orangism was as much a product of groups of citizens on the receiving end of Orangist policy and propaganda as it was the product of the Orangist court in turn serves a larger argument about the way that people in the Dutch Republic participated in politics – whether actively or by representation – through the use of political communication. Citizens had their own ideas about Dutch politics, and they were not afraid to share their thoughts in pamphlets. It was this civic movement that determined the limits of Orangism. Measured by William's successive pamphlet campaigns and his policies, even the prince of Orange could not trample ideas that were shared openly by a large enough part of the pamphlet public.

This leads us to the problem of the public. We have seen that pamphlets and petitions, the preferred communication tools for citizens, could shift authority, be it by no means completely, from government to an anonymous public. Recent historiography has enthusiastically connected this tendency with the rise of Habermas's public sphere. The public, however, consisted of groups of citizens who believed politics to be a balance of rights and duties. The outcome of the tensions between propaganda and

³⁸ Roorda, *Partij en Factie*, 241–243.

³⁹ Panhuysen, *Rampjaar 1672*, 301.

inclusion of citizens in the political debate was a popular political culture wherein regents felt compelled to inform, explain and educate their audience politically, which was often combined with a show of splendour that was meant to awe the audience. Regents never failed to use their propaganda to stress the obedience that was owed to them. Citizens, however, engaged in pamphleteering as well. They published their own pamphlets and petitions and showed that they could not be omitted from the body politic. There were severe restrictions to this participation though. Non-citizens were excluded. The public was most certainly not “the people” or “the crowd”. A group of petitioners from Amsterdam explained: “We do not praise the law of the many-headed monster.”⁴⁰

Moreover, the custom of taking away authority from government and bestowing it on an anonymous public seems to have been intimately intertwined with the breakdown of good government. As soon as a large enough part of the citizens believed that good government was in place again, the necessity for the authority of the anonymous public decreased and normal political relations returned. The authority of the public did not grow linearly after its emergence. On the contrary, the role of the public expanded and contracted over time.⁴¹ We can witness this expanding and contracting public role in 1672. In May, for example, when the regent Arend Tollenaar published the first part of a publication called the *Remonstrance*, he dedicated it to the States of Holland. When he published the second part in December of the same year, he also dedicated it to “the public”.⁴²

As soon as prospects for the future became increasingly bleak in 1672, appeals to the public grew in number, volume and political implication. Mayor Bouwensch from the city of Tiel published a letter on 11 June in which he publicly apologized for his long absence from the city after a visit to the prince of Orange. He had been stuck between enemy armies. When he did return to Tiel, Bouwensch was attacked by citizens on the street. He was accused of treachery. The people from Tiel assured him that “his neck would be broken” because he had been gone at the precise time that they had needed him. Bouwensch, who feared for his life, therefore published a pamphlet. He described how his trip to the prince

⁴⁰ *Missive, Aen sijn Hoogheyt Den Heere Prince Van Orange* (1672), Knuttel 10549.

⁴¹ *Knights, Representation*.

⁴² Tollenaar, *Remonstrantie* (1672), Knuttel 10034; Tollenaar (1672), *Stucken*, Knuttel 10035.

of Orange had become a dangerous and adventurous odyssey, which explained his lengthy absence. To be sure that his actions were perceived as transparent, Bouwensch added to his publication a justification of tax expenditure for the time that he had been in office.⁴³ Similarly, in the province of Friesland the regent Daniel de Blocq van Scheltinga was so afraid after he had been accused of corruption in several anonymous pamphlets that he published a pamphlet on 18 July defending his case, and he also willingly locked himself up in prison for his own protection.⁴⁴

This public, to which was attributed the agency of judgement in political issues, disappeared again after 1672. Still, something essential had changed. During the remainder of the history of the Dutch Republic, in times of crisis the printed petition, the anonymous public and the 'national' debate returned. During these periods of strife that were accompanied by intense pamphleteering the public as a temporary authority changed little in character. The boundaries of this particular part of Dutch popular political culture had already been set during the hot summer of 1672.

⁴³ G. Bouwensch, *Missive, Door de Heer Burgemeester Bouwensch* (1672), Knuttel 10050.

⁴⁴ A. van Loo and I. de Schepper, *Twee Placcaten Van de Staten van Frieslant* (1672), Petit 3902; *Extract* (1672), Knuttel 10158.

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GAR Gemeentelijk Archief Rotterdam
NA Nationaal Archief
KHA Koninklijk Huis Archief

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